NEW ADVENTURES OF CAPT KETTLE and McTODD

Adventure

JANUARY
10 CENTS

THE ROBERTS COMPANY PUBLISHERS OF ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

AS I noted briefly at the time, ADVENTURE had its first birthday several months ago. The first issue bore the words, "November, 1910," and the new magazine made its first appearance on any news-stand somewhere in the first part of October of that year.

Promptly all the writers east and west of the Mississippi opened their "barrels" and deluged us with all the manuscripts they hadn't been able to sell up to date. That's what happens to every new magazine. Some of the barrels were very large. I have forgotten how much my school arithmetic said a barrel holds, but some of these were larger than that.

But a great deal of fresh, new material came, too. Good adventure stories, like good humorous stories, are hard to get, and many people, particularly people in the magazine business, had said, sympathetically, "Yes, that first number is a daisy, but I'm afraid you can't hold the pace."

Our sales say that we have. And this is the fifteenth issue of ADVENTURE.

One thing the other people didn't count on has helped us. The writers liked the idea. They welcomed a magazine that offered a steady market for strong, clean, red-blooded stories, yet maintained a distinct literary standard. If you will study our list of contributors you will find names that appear in only the best magazines.

Another thing helped. The world is full of real adventurers—men who live in the open, who take long chances, in whose breasts burns a restless flame. Until I came to ADVENTURE I had not realized how many of them there are. These men welcomed a magazine whose spirit was so like their own and in whose pages they could find some word of the far places they had known or meant to know and could glean some news of their fellow-wanderers. Some of them had never written before, but they began. And some of them have found that they can write exceedingly well.

Day by day new adventurers and new adventure-writers come into our office. Day by day the supply of possible material increases. The past year has brought us many good stories. The coming year is going to bring us more.

One of them is a novelette by Hugh Pendexter—"The Crimson Tracks." I will stop only long enough to say that we in the office consider it the best detective story we have read anywhere for several years.

"The Marriage of Kettle" is present to speak for itself. It needs no other voice. Captain Kettle, McTodd, Miss Dubbs, Captain Saturday Farnish, Sidi Mohammed Bergash, Violet and Sir George Chesterman can stand on their own feet.

There are more stories by Talbot Mundy and H. D. Couzens. We have heard from enough of our readers to know that we are not alone in our high estimate of these two writers. Both will write their names large before they are through. There is to be a story of Mr. Mundy's in our next number—"The Soul of a Regiment." Read it and compare it with some of Kipling's.

And Peter B. Kyne. That's man's stuff, what he writes! And Donal Hamilton Haines, Adolph Bennauer, Nevil G. Henshaw, H. C. Bailey (with some more tales of Witless Dick), George Hull, John A. Heffernan (with some more Jake Buchmuller stories), George Allen England, Hesketh Prichard—but no need to go on with the long list.

No, we'll have no trouble in getting plenty of good adventure stories. Our pessimistic friends in the magazine business have ceased to predict. We've proved the idea upon which ADVENTURE was founded—that the love of adventure is in all men's hearts and that a magazine that brought to stay-at-home and world-wanderer alike the Spirit of Adventure could not fail of success.

And personally I am very glad, for, aside from obvious reasons, it is good to know that men still welcome a fresh breeze from the Seven Seas and the far lands beyond, and that bravery and daring, self-sacrifice and the facing of great odds, are not yet dead within their breasts.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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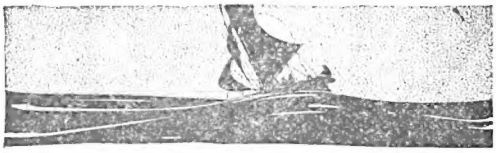

WHEN she was six years old she was shipped alone with a tag from Bloomington, Illinois, to New York. Only a few years later the miners threw gold nuggets on the stage, when she died, and she spoiled a scene in "East Lynne" by jumping for them. Once, after telephoning for the reserves and ambulances, she was hidden in the wall safety-vault of the Illinois Malleable Iron Works, because about two thousand strikers, mostly Poles and Lithuanians, were coming on a dead run, half naked, armed with anything they could lay their hands on, to kill the office staff.

Once a bullet made a hole through the cap she was wearing.

Yet Izola Forrester says her real adventures began when she went into newspaper work on New York and Chicago dailies at the age of seventeen. I should be inclined to credit her with some before this. And she was a reporter only three years, changing her name to Merrifield when she was twenty. Those three years must have been busy ones.

The story told in "Her Excellenza" she heard from a young Russian on a ferry-boat going to Blackwell's Island where his wife lay ill at the City Hospital. He is the lad Estvan in the story.

JUST now Adolph Bennauer is out in Washington, helping to run a location survey for a railroad along the Snake River to Homestead. A wilderness with scenery —some of it rather rugged, for they lower one another to work with ropes down the sides of the canyon, and their only means of transportation is surf-boats. One doesn't usually run a transit with a surf-boat, but Mr. Bennauer has done a good many things that are not usual, for he has been adventuring ever since his high-school days. Of which more some other time, and, meanwhile, see what you think of "The Brass Chest."

JOHN A. HEFFERNAN, who writes our Jake Buchmuller stories—over which we hope you laugh as hard as we do—once told me he had never had any adventures and, to back it up, advanced the fact that he was born in Brooklyn. But Mr. Heffernan has been in politics, Wall Street and newspaper work and now deals in real estate. So he *has* had them. He adventures a wee bit in this number by giving us "The Dragon," quite different from his other tales in ADVENTURE, but a good one.

THAT Brooklyn argument is no good, anyhow. Arthur D. Howden Smith was born in Brooklyn. When you've read "Fighting the Turks in Macedonia" pause and consider that he was only nineteen when he went through those experiences. And yet this boy—the youngest man ever so honored —when on his way home from Bulgaria was invited to lecture before the Balkan Committee, among whose members were the Archbishop of Canterbury and the principal peers and political leaders of England.

WHEN "The Marriage of Kettle" gets a little farther along it will introduce you to the West Coast of Africa and that amazing race, the Berbers. If you know no more of them historically than I did, you'll open your eyes. And with Tripoli and Morocco so much to the front nowadays, all that part of the Dark Continent takes on added interest. Mr. Hyne, by the way, has traveled from the Congo to Tunis, not merely along the coast but back in the interior.

WHEN you read "The Girl and the Jungle," by Thomas Samson Miller, it may add to your interest to know that the author is writing out of his own experiences, for he was himself once an officer of the Royal Niger Chartered Company in Africa. His own life is a story in itself, but I'll let him tell it to you direct later on. You can know that it will be well told. ADVENTURE aims to give stories that have literary quality as well as interest, and Mr. Miller is not least among those who help us in that aim.

ALL newspaper men have adventures, and George Holmes Cushing, who has a strong story of the Great Lakes in this number, is a newspaper man. One of his specialties is hunting for trouble—opening doors, he calls it. Once, in Springfield, Ohio, when a murderer had gone to sleep in a box-car—but I mustn't start on stories when I haven't space to tell them. We'll have to leave the murderer in the box-car for a month. It won't hurt him any.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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JANUARY 1912

THE MARRIAGE OF KETTLE

by C·J·Cutcliffe Hyne*

SYNOPSIS: The steamer *Norman Towers* is caught short of coal in the midst of the Sargasso Sea. Captain Saturday Farnish, easy-going and hard-drinking, is unequal to the emergency. His first mate, Owen Kettle, whom the kind-hearted but inefficient old man had raised from a boy, shoulders the responsibility. After overcoming the demented chief engineer, who had run dangerously amuck, the dapper, fire-eating little Kettle picks the worst men of the crew and sets off in a boat on the desperate chance of getting coal from another ship. The German steamer *Rhein* refuses to stop when hailed but shortly afterward breaks down, is boarded by Kettle, practically captured and ordered to return with coal to the *Norman Towers*. Miss Violet Chesterman, an English gentlewoman, tells Kettle that the *Rhein* was forced to stop because its engines had been tampered with by McTodd, a Scotch engineer with a sharp tongue, a colossal impudence, great efficiency and a humorous outlook on life.

CHAPTER VII

THE DUTCHMAN PAYS

THE *Rhein* ran briskly alongside the *Norman Towers*, turned her engines to full speed astern, and came to a dead stop some twenty fathoms away. It was very smartly done.

Mr. O. Kettle from the upper bridge of the *Rhein* looked across at his own ship and frowned. Her side was rust-streaked and shabby; her bottom, when she heaved up to the long blue swell of the Sargasso Sea, showed a grass-green garden of weed; her rigging and funnel-stays were ill set up; and her decks were cluttered with untidy litter. A derrick-boom which had jumped out of its chock traversed about the foredeck as she rolled, and scored a bright arc on the iron plating between bulwark and hatch. From the foreshrouds there blew out the remaining third of a wind-ragged Union Jack, which had been seized there, union down, as a permanent sign of calamity. Even the falls of the port lifeboat had not been touched since Mr. Kettle unhooked from them, and the blocks, with a catch of orange-yellow Gulf weed streaming from them, soused in the water or bumped against the plating as the steamer rolled.

Mr. Kettle summed up the situation. "Old Man standing by the whisky-bottle. Others too slack to carry on without orders."

He glanced round rather nervously at Miss Chesterman who (by special invitation) was on the upper bridge at his side. He obviously expected comment and, with the nervousness of a man who sees the infelici-

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ties of his own fireside exposed to a stranger, dreaded it.

She skirted the subject tactfully. "How delighted your friends will be to see you back."

"Bringing coal."

"If you like to put it that way. But come to think of it, isn't it natural one should always admire success? You set out on a forlorn hope and you've succeeded; what could be more satisfactory?"

Miss Chesterman was tall and generously proportioned. She was all that one means by the description "a fine, handsome woman," and like many girls of her build she was frankly and openly attracted by a man half a head shorter than herself. In fact, during the four days in which the *Rhein* hunted for the disabled *Norman Towers* she had worked up between herself and the little sailor something that might be described as a hot flirtation.

But at this moment on the upper bridge of his captured steamboat Mr. Kettle was a ship's officer and nothing beyond. In reply to the whistle-hoot a dozen apathetic figures appeared on the *Norman Towers'* untidy decks, but there was no Captain Farnish and no trace of organized discipline, and for a moment Mr. Kettle gritted his teeth in a spasm of rage at the spectacle.

"Miss," he said, turning to the lady. "What you see there is entirely my fault. Captain Farnish suffers from malaria, and I guess he's down with a bad attack. He deliberately signed on inferior mates and engineers, as he did me the honor to entrust the discipline of the boat to his Chief Officer, and that's me. When my back's turned, you see what happens. When I get back on board there you'll see discipline come back like a conjuring trick."

He hailed across, addressing the second and third mates by name and demanding a boat; but none was forthcoming. Apathy had bitten into that crew too deeply, and finally it was in the *Rhein's* quarter-boat, rowed by the negro and the German, and escorted by a shoal of excited flying-fish that he passed across to his own ship.

By way of emphasizing his home-coming he knocked down the first three men who stood in his path, and then marched briskly into the chart-house. Captain Farnish, with the usual tear in his eye, sat huddled in his red velvet chair, and Mr. Kettle noted with fresh distaste that the castor of the lame leg was still absent.

"Come back on board, sir. I've brought that coal."

"Very pleased to see you, Mr. Kettle, me man. But I don't think coal interests me now. My professhnal reputation's eternally punctured; 'n all on account of that psalm-singing Mr. Little. Never you take up psalm singing, Mr. Kettle, me man, or if you do, take —— good care to pick out the right psalms."

"I'll remember that, sir. But I'd like to point out that whatever else the owners may be, at any rate they're business men. It isn't as if the old *Towers* was fully insured. They stand to lose twenty-five per cent. if she's a total loss, and to pay according on salvage. Now you've saved them that."

Captain Farnish shook a blowsy head.

"Think that Dutch boat won't put in a big claim for salvage?"

"She might," said his Chief Officer dryly, "if anybody aboard her knew our name. But you see, I've every soul of her people under hatches, and there, if you'll give me my way, sir, they'll stay till we've got the coal we want and are away out of sight."

"But your own boat's crew—won't they tell the Dutch skipper if he asks?"

"Well, there are two reasons against that, sir. First, the *Rhein* didn't treat us very civilly, and my men were mad enough to eat her, funnel and all, by the time we did get on board. And secondly, I've had the handling of these men for a considerable number of days in our lifeboat, sir, and I can guarantee that—with *me* in command of them—they're the best disciplined handful of toughs in the Western Ocean to-day."

"I can believe it. You have a knack with you in handling a crew, Mr. Kettle, me man. Must have got it from me, I suppose. My whiskers! but I was a fine bucko mate in my days before I got command and had to take so many precautions against malaria. But it would have to come out sooner or later who we are. We can't take the Dutchman's coal without paying for it. That's blame' near piracy."

"Beg your pardon, sir, but I wasn't proposing anything of the sort. You've money in the drawer next the chronometer, in hard cash. I suppose there's some one amongst those incompetents down in the engine-room who can figure out how many tons it will take to steam us home, and we will pay the *Rhein* at Newport rates plus five shillings a ton added for the emergency call. You

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can take it from me, sir, the subject will then drop. That Dutch skipper (although I can not like his eyeglasses or the cut of his beard) is a man with a pride of his own, and you'll never find him going to a consulate and squalling that his whole ship had been held up by a boatload of starving scarecrows that he'd tried to desert in mid-ocean. No, sir, there's human nature even amongst Dutchmen, and the man'll hold his tongue."

"Splendid thing, human nature," Captain Farnish assented, "though I still feel my position is precarious. I mean very risky thing to depend on glass-eyed Dutchman possessing human nature. Eh, well, as you've come back, Owen, me man, I can hand over charge to you with full, I may say fullest, confidence. Strain of your absence has been so very great I really must indulge in half an hour's sleep." And murmuring "Never get married, Mr. Kettle, me man; Strain of keeping subsequent family out of workhouse most exhausting," Captain Farnish broke off into a most enjoyable snore.

THE little Mate frowned. He took a book from the shelf above the washstand and fitted it under the castorless leg of the red velvet chair when it lurched upward to the roll of the ship, and then pressed on the bell-push till the Captain's steward came.

"My man," said the Mate, "I've come back on board this packet, and don't you forget it! Next time you fail to answer a bell promptly I'll give you a dose of smartening powder that will take a week to digest. Now turn to and clean out that big starboard stateroom below and make up a bed in the lower bunk. If I find a speck of dirt when I come to inspect, I'll make you wash the whole place out with your tongue! It is probable that a lady passenger will travel in that room, and if I hear so much as a word of complaint from her, I'll attend to you in a way that'll make you hate the sea for the remainder of your natural life!"

Mr. Kettle went out on deck then, sent certain messages and presently was holding a meeting of the second and third mates and the second and third engineers in the saloon below. Proceedings were entirely private, and no report of them, official or unofficial, were ever issued, which goes to show that whatever differences officers of the mercantile marine may have amongst themselves, it is a point of strictest etiquette with them to keep these away from outsiders.

It was, however, matter of common note that after the meeting broke up the second mate (who hated responsibility) had a puffed and darkened left eye which showed signs of rapidly closing, that the third's collar was burst at both ends, and that both the second and third engineers, young men who were always sallow, were both so white as to suggest that anger and insult burned hotly within them. But the next thing noticeable about the quartette was their briskness. They had gone into that meeting limp and dispirited. They emerged angry but energetic. And incidentally the record also tells that Mr. Kettle had contrived to break both sets of his own knuckles.

Affairs marched rapidly from now onward. The infection of briskness spread. The lethargic crew woke up—or were rudely awakened. A boatload of them went across to the *Rhein*, and to their surprise found themselves under the crisp command of a truculent officer in whom they recognized one Jenkins, ex-incompetent-deckhand of the *Norman Towers*.

But Mr. Jenkins soon proved himself an officer of affairs. He yapped out orders with the true bucko mate's bark. Derricks were lifted and winches rigged to raise the coal from below; bags were found to carry it in; tarpaulins were stripped and hatches removed; and lo, at the bottom of the hold, amongst the coal, there stood ready the Scots engineer McTodd facing (after the manner of a drill sergeant) a squad of German firemen and trimmers who carried their shovels before them stiffly at the salute.

Yap-yap-yap, barked Jenkins, and the work was carried out at the run. A towing hawser was passed, and the *Rhein* steamed ahead to keep it taut. Then, with the distance constant between the two vessels, a Temporley transporter was rigged. A wire was stretched from the *Rhein's* maintop to the *Norman Towers'* foretop and on this traveled the usual mechanism of sheaves and blocks. Mr. Jenkins stood beside the *Rhein's* poop-staff and threw up a hand to signify that all was ready at his end. Mr. Kettle on the forecastle head of the *Norman Towers* gave a similar arm signal for "Go ahead."

Coal from below was loaded into bags, whipped on deck, slung aloft, and sent

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dancing out above the dipping towing hawser. The bags were dumped on the *Norman Towers'* foredeck, and their contents were emptied into the hungry bunkers. The steamers rolled criss-cross to the swells in a halo of coal-dust and work was pushed forward at a pace that nearly satisfied even that master of the art of driving, Mr. Owen Kettle.

All helped except Captain Farnish, who attended to his malaria; the *Rhein's* officers and crew, who were battened down in the *Rhein's* Number One hold, and raged together there furiously; and Miss Violet Chesterman, who sat in the Captain's own Madeira chair on the *Rhein's* upper bridge and watched proceedings with absorbed interest.

MISS VIOLET CHESTERMAN was a young lady of some considerable experience of life. Her years numbered only twenty-three, but she had lived every minute of them. She had gone through seasons in London, New York and Paris; she had lived in a Swiss mountain hotel in Winter, and in a salmon-fisher's log house in Norway; she had yachted, bicycled, danced, golfed; she knew the delights of Winter cock-shooting in the West of Ireland, and the gorgeous boredom of Court functions in London.

She had money and a fascinating manner, and knew the thrill of many proposals; and, a month before the date that this chronicle opens, found herself formally engaged to be married. I will not give away the adventurous man's name, as he is husband now of a far more suitable young woman, and I do not wish to disturb them. But I may say that he was a peer who played a good game of polo, owned three very fine houses, and had foreseen English predatory legislation so cleverly that he had practically all his capital invested beyond the reach of socialistic theft.

Personally I have always found him amusing, and so presumably did Miss Chesterman till she became engaged to him. But after that they apparently bored each other to the verge of tears. He, being a gentleman, played the engaged man's game down to the last comma, but she, toward the end of that month, became acutely miserable.

An uncle saved the situation. He was fishing for tarpon and catching sharks in the Panuco River at Tampico, and he wrote her a half-joking invitation to come out and amuse her aunt. She cabled a frantic "Yes," rushed down to Southampton just in time to see the North German Lloyd boat put to sea, and within an hour had engaged a passage on the German tramp S. S. *Rhein*, then on the point of departure for Gulf ports with coal and general cargo. From the safe harborage of the *Rhein's* stuffy saloon in Southampton water she wrote the friendliest possible letter, breaking off her engagement, and when this had been sent ashore by the pilot, set herself to study the manners and customs of that unknown animal, the German merchant seaman.

For a week Miss Chesterman found her new associates interesting. She marveled three times daily at the amount of knife-blade they could swallow at meals without cutting themselves; their martial bearing, their bows, and their taste for sentiment were all frankly amusing; but at the end of that week these grew stale and a general feeling of fastidious disgust filled her to the brim. (Those unfortunates who have met the German mariner at home on the high seas will be able to supply the details.) There were moments when she thought she might have done worse than close with the offer so recently rejected. And she was in this frame of mind when she encountered Romance, in the largest of capitals and (as she believed) for the first time in her life, in the person of Mr. Owen Kettle.

You are to imagine her leaning over the poop rail of the *Rhein*, watching the battered lifeboat that she herself had sighted being callously left astern to perish in the desert of the sea. Any man or woman living would have been thrilled by the sight of that little ship's officer sitting there undaunted amongst his lean scarecrow crew with nothing else in sight but blue sky, blue Sargasso Sea, and orange-yellow weed.

It had been a shock to her to find that the engineer took the whole as a matter of ordinary German routine. "German shipowners were in business to make dividends, not to waste time over saving the lives of competitors," was the view that Mr. McTodd took. And then she had turned her eloquence on the Scot and had seen that acid Northerner thaw out and deliberately risk the safety of the ship to do her pleasure. Romance! She drew deep breath as she

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thought of it. These were deeper waters than those she had known before, and as for the men that trafficked in them—well, at any rate they were men.

And then she had seen this Mr. Kettle, with nothing much else besides his bare hands and his personality, take possession of a big, well-found, strongly-manned steamer and carry her off to do his pleasure in the teeth of all opposition. The man was something quite new to her, something full to the brim with primeval vigor. No wonder she fell in love with him.

THE coaling went on with noise and dust and orderly speed. The steamers rolled criss-cross, but the *Rhein's* engines kept the lines taut and the bunches of coal-bags went hopping merrily across from lower masthead to lower masthead to the boundless amazement of the flying-fish. It is a nice operation, this coaling at sea, and none of the crew of the *Norman Towers* had ever witnessed it before. They were interested at first, and heartily sick of it before it was finished, but it was astonishing to note that no one complained of tiredness. When Mr. Kettle returned on board they were one and all sunk in a slough of lethargy, and the process of waking up under his hard driving was painful to many of them. But the small Mate was perfectly callous to their inclinations toward laziness, and even that chartered idler, the carpenter, was seen to carry out an order at the run when Mr. Kettle's trim hoe's toe threatened him from the rear.

But at last the hungry bunkers were stored with sufficient fuel to steam the *Norman Towers* back to Liverpool, and crisp orders were given to knock off and unrig the transporter.

In the meanwhile fires had been lighted under the cold boilers, and smoke trickled from the rusty stack. The escort of sea-gulls recognized the omens and rose mewing from the water ready to fly on with labored wing to that spot in mid-ocean where the gulls from the Azores would take over the watch. The *Norman Towers'* boat returned from the *Rhein*, bringing her people, bringing also, as Mr. Kettle noted with a queer thrill, Miss Violet Chesterman.

Tentatively he had offered the lady an alternative to the discomforts of the German boat and (as we have seen) had ordered a stateroom for her in case she came. But it was not till she had seen him bring back energy and discipline to his old crew that she made up her mind to take the step which (as she was well aware) would probably cut her off from her own caste for the remainder of her life.

The German officers and crew still remained battened down in their own Number One hold, and the sole remaining occupant of the *Rhein's* outer decks was the Scots engineer. Him Mr. Kettle, the Mate, hailed.

"You there, Mr. McTodd, won't you come back in our boat? Captain Farnish would be very pleased to give you a passage back to Liverpool."

"I thank ye. But I'll stay where I've signed on."

"But, man, they'll eat you when you let them out of that hold."

"Man," bawled the Scot, wagging a discolored forefinger across the dark blue swells, "yon's a very humorous observe. It's just for the fun of seeing them try that I'm staying on. If ever you're down at Clydebank two months hence, ask for me there and you'll hear news of how these Dutchmen fancied their meal."

Miss Violet Chesterman drew a deep breath as she listened. This manner of men was new to her experience. They might be many things, but at any rate she decided they were men.

CHAPTER VIII

MR. KETTLE GOES TO SLEEP

CAPTAIN FARNISH'S appearance at sea has already been lightly described by the word "blousy." Once out of soundings, he lived a life of slippered, unbuttoned, unshaven ease, complicated with (as has been hinted frequently) systematic attempts to keep away symptoms of malaria. But once he had given orders to fly for a pilot, he bathed, he did mighty surgical deeds with a razor, and his steward was hugely busy over brushing the mold from boots and wearing apparel.

There was nothing of the popular idea of the mariner in Captain Farnish's shore rig. He wore a black tail-coat and austere trousers; his waistcoat was cut low (as if to show the edges of his economical shirt front) and displayed a fine gold stud and a pious black bow tie; and after he had taken his

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false teeth from the drawer in the chart table where they traveled when at sea, and clicked them in between his lips, he would have passed comfortably for a well-to-do grocer with strong nonconformist tendencies.

He practised a smile or two at himself in the looking-glass to make sure his teeth were working correctly, shipped the square-topped bowler hat which the steward reverently handed him, and went out on deck.

"Mr. Kettle, me man."

"Sir?"

"Good old smell, the Liverpool river, isn't it? Not an ounce of fever in a mile of it. Er—if you want to slip ashore before we dock, that'll be all right."

"I trust you'll allow me to take the fore-deck as usual, sir."

"If you choose to remain on board," said Captain Farnish dryly, "I should say a boatswain's chair in a ventilator would be the healthiest spot for you. Just remember, me man, that that blame' Dutchman has had a week ashore at Tampico by this, and if he hasn't been making the cables hum, I'll swallow my ivories. It isn't as if we were in New York, where they always back their own side. You're in good old England now, Owen, me man, where, when a case comes on in the courts, the Stipendiary and the papers always say the Englishman's wrong."

"You think it'll be a case of the police, sir?"

"I'm pretty sure of it."

"Ah," said Mr. Kettle, the Mate, thoughtfully.

"Yes, I quite see what you're considering. Your idea is that you've done nothing to be ashamed of, and that when the police come you'll put up a fight that half Liverpool would pay sixpence a head to come and stare at. Well, in ordinary circumstances I'd be the last man to try and head you off—you having right on your side, as we're agreed. But I want you to remember that you've got somebody else to consider now, and that's this Miss Chesterman you've been sparking so hard. I'll own up at once she's not my clip, but then I know quite well I'm the old style of shellback and you're the new.

"You like to sport a brass-edged uniform whether you're on shore or sea, and — well you look in it, me man. That ginger-colored torpedo beard sets you off well, too—makes you look a kind of breezy fellow that'd go anywhere to find a bit of trouble. And I don't see why you shouldn't marry the girl, either. She should have money, by her accent, and if you've sense you'll cut the sea and find an occupation ashore. If I were you I'd go into the corn business. There's said to be money in it, and it's certainly genteel if only you're in a big enough way."

"If ever I marry, I do not leave the sea. There'll be no question about that."

"You're young, and you've none depending on you. Wait till the kiddies begin to arrive, and then you'll wish you'd a nice quiet hen-farm and a balance in the savings bank."

Now Mr. Kettle the Mate had himself thought this matter out very thoroughly already. Like most officers of the mercantile marine he was quite ready to stand up to all that came from either man or the elements on the face of the waters, but he had an instinctive dread and distrust for English law ashore. The law (according to his view) was always on the side of the owner or the crew, and any officer who was dragged into court was disbelieved and insulted, and emerged from the ordeal with his certificate suspended or endorsed, and his future professional prospects eternally blasted.

Of course, too, if Captain Farnish appeared before a stipendiary magistrate or a Board of Trade inquiry, that disgusting mode of torture known as a cross-examination would inevitably bring to light items of his past history—connected with avoidance of malaria, for instance—and cause him to lose his present billet, and inevitably debar him from ever getting another. There is small demand these days for elderly shipmasters: none at all if they are known to have their failings.

Whether the German complained or not, the *Norman Towers* was long overdue and underwriters would most certainly press for an inquiry even if owners were inclined to hush matters up. Somebody would have to be sacrificed. If Little, the Chief Engineer, had only been kind enough to die on the passage home, blame might very well have been piled on to his absent shoulders. But Mr. Little had recovered. He had not only sloughed off his madness, but had turned very shrewd and sane, and (somewhat naturally) was prepared to fight tooth and nail for the retention of his own chief's certificate. "Say a word against me," said

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Mr. Little, "and I'll swear an affidavit I told the Old Man in Vera Cruz we'd only enough coal to carry us to mid-ocean, and he was too blind to care. Yes, and I can bring witnesses to prove it. You can bet the hands hate the Mate enough to swear to anything he dislikes after the way he's driven them."

Mr. Kettle recognized the soundness of the argument. There remained, then, the alternative of professional ruin for either Captain Farnish or himself, and what his superior officer expected of him was clear enough. *If you want to slip ashore before we dock, that'll be all right.* It was frankly selfish of course, but then, after all, self-preservation is the first law of mercantile marine officers (as it is of Nature), especially if the officers are married and have families and no means. As a clinching argument Mrs. Farnish's last words to him as he left the home where he had been brought up, leaped back to his memory: "Owen, boy, you'll look after my old man."

OF COURSE, there was Miss Chesterman. Once professional ruin overtook him, he was quite of opinion that his little romance with her would come to an undignified end. She was certainly very much in love with him at that period, and though he tried to persuade himself that he was in love with her, I do not think that his feeling ever amounted to that. He was a good deal dazzled by her charm, and he was certainly flattered by her preference and (in his turn) imagined that she was attracted by his rapid rise in his own profession, and the prospect that he would with luck be presently standing on the upper bridge of a steamer as full-fledged ship master. Mr. Kettle the Mate had a full idea of the importance of the Captain Kettle that was to be in the future.

So if he made himself scapegoat it must be an understood thing that all his pretensions to the hand of Miss Violet Chesterman must vanish at once. And all (his demon suggested to him) for the sake of an injunction laid upon him by that uninteresting old woman, Mrs. Saturday Farnish. Mr. Kettle laughed grimly to himself.

"The old dear has it easily, of course."

Thereafter he made rapid preparations. His clothes, and the poor contents of his room, he packed into a tin trunk and an antique portmanteau, and addressed care of Mrs. S. Farnish at an unfashionable terrace in Birkenhead. He strapped on a money-belt and in it stowed the bulk of his capital—namely, three pound ten in gold, distributing the balance of sixteen and twopence in his waistcoat pockets; he slipped the German captain's revolver—that *spolia opima*—into a back pocket, where it nestled very kindly—and after an effort in arithmetic he enclosed nine and sixpence in an envelope addressed to the chief steward in payment of his beer and tobacco account for the voyage.

His method of getting into a shore boat was masterly in its simplicity. He went into the wheel engine-house, waited his opportunity, and then clapped a heavy spanner in between the helical cogs of the drive. The sturdy little engines hiccoughed and stopped, and the helm (which was hard over at the time) caused the *Norman Towers* to make a most alarming sheer across the fairway.

On the upper bridge the Point Lynas pilot in a panic rang his main engines to full speed astern, and the *Norman Towers* shivered and lurched herself to a sudden standstill in the middle of a lakelet of muddy foam. To her shot up a small open boat under lugsail and jib, attracted by an arm wave from the Mate. The two shabby men in her looked up keenly.

Mr. Kettle the Mate, with a rope in his hand, clapped his feet against the ship's side and ran down it nimbly to the boat, jumping on to her gunwale exactly as she rounded up alongside.

"You're nippy," said the shabby man at the tiller as he shot the boat up into the wind.

"I am. Now away with you ashore, my lad, and drop me at the nearest telegraph office."

"Got the price of your passage on you?"

"You can put it down to the firm. I guess it's for their benefit I hailed you."

"Seems to me there's trouble on board. The old junk don't steer. There's the Old Man on the top deck laying down the time o' day to the pilot, and that bit of skirt on the poop's holdin' out beseeching arms to some one in this boat that I don't think's me. Mister, by your leave, I'm going to run alongside again to see if the firm ashore will really O. K. your bus fare to that telegraph office, or if there's some one who'll give a bit more to have you put back on board. Hi! you, mister, put that down!"

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Mr. Kettle, armed with a stretcher, was standing up in the boat. Said he: "If either of you two ducks don't carry out my orders exactly as they're given, I'll knock one or both of you overboard and sail your rotten old tub myself. D'ye hear me?"

"I suppose I do."

"Say 'sir' when you're speaking to an officer. D'ye know your course, or shall I set it for you?"

"The ebb's making pretty hard still, but it'll be slack water before we're across . . . *mumble* . . . *mumble* . . . so I'd better take you on to Foston, sir."

"Why there? It isn't the nearest." Mr Kettle noted that the man in the bows looked surprised.

"It's quickest, sir, with this wind and tide. Isn't it, Alfred?"

And Alfred from the bows glibly perjured himself and said they'd be in at Foston telegraph office an hour earlier than they could reach any other.

Mr. Kettle did not believe them, but he let it rest at that. After all, his telegram, which was merely a message announcing arrival to Mrs. Farnish, was of no vast importance, and so he set himself to smoking his pipe and thinking gloomily over the mess he had made of the present, the definiteness with which he had lost Miss Chesterman, and the hash he had made of his future. "They'll take away my new Master's ticket as sure as there are pips in little apples," he told himself, "and it's China Seas for mine now, and a pig boat with a coolie crew and a yellow owner."

CHAPTER IX

A BARMAID TO THE RESCUE

NIGHT fell on the tawny Mersey, and the ships' lights kindled in the purple gloom and threaded through it at a decorous pace, or swung rhythmically on a station. A wind from the north and east blew chill across the face of the waters, and the outgoing and incoming steam traffic hooted helm signals in forty keys. The cool, damp, muddy river smell, with its faint acid tinge of sewage, came to him like an old friend.

"Rice, chopsticks and pigtails for mine," Mr. Kettle reminded himself again. "But they say the Chinee girls are fine." And then thumping the dew-pocked gunwale with a hard fist, "No, I'm blowed if I do!" he swore. "The beastly British Board of Trade sha'n't run me out of my profession simply because I've done my duty in that state of life to which it pleased the Lord to call me! I'll win out in spite of all their teeth, and command British ships for white owners on the decent seas. And I'll marry——"

At that point, apparently from the parting of its halliards, the lugsail descended suddenly and enveloped Mr. Kettle in its damp dew-sodden folds. The yard also hit him on the head, and for an instant he was driven below the gunwale level. But it took more than a trifle like that to knock a Western Ocean mate out of time. He was up again on the instant.

"You clumsy swine!" he bawled from beneath his covering to the boatmen. "I'll teach you to rig a boat! Clear away this wreck!"

He sat up, and the top of his head under the sail showed as a round dome beneath the moonlight. On it, at the full strength of the steerman's arm, descended the oaken tiller, and Mr. Kettle subsided as a bull does when it is pole-axed.

Said Alfred, the shabby man in the bows, making no effort to move or help. "You've done it now, Arthur. When you signed to me to cut the halliards, I never thought you meant murder."

"Murder be blowed!" retorted his friend. "I doubt if I've put him to sleep for an hour. You'll see he'll wake up again in sixty minutes punctual to the clock, and as full of ginger as he can stick. He's a hard case mate, this one, if ever I saw such a fellow, and he'll carry a skull like a cannon-ball, or he'd have had it fractured long before this. Now we'll just inspect his bank-balance. To be true to his type he should carry the bulk of it in a money-belt next the meat. Let's inspect. There, didn't I tell you? And I'll just take the liberty of dropping this revolver over into the ditch. I don't fancy myself as a marksman, and if I started any fancy shooting with it I should probably bag my dear old pal Alfred instead of the bearded one here. Well, old son, here's thirty bob and I'll keep the balance as my share and agent's commission."

"But what are we going to do with him? If we take him ashore he'll lay a complaint."

"Don't you believe it, old son. His nibs here has kicked over the traces—killed a deckhand, as likely as not, and was shy

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about going on to Liverpool to meet the police on the pierhead. You can bet he didn't switch off and come with us just on account of our looks. And when he steps ashore the only thing he'll ask for will be to slip quietly away and no questions asked."

Alfred shivered. "I shall be glad enough to see the last of him. He's a tough-looking customer. I hope he'll start to run quick."

"He would if he was let. The trouble (for him) will be that we've got further use for him."

Alfred was clearly distressed. "I won't be a party to any further games," he babbled.

"Wait till you're invited, old son."

"But what are you up to? It isn't murder? I couldn't stand that. I—I believe I'd inform if you did."

"My brave boy, calm your twittering nerves. The gentleman is far more valuable to us alive than dead. He is going to ship as fireman on a voyage to Valparaiso, and we—or perhaps I should say I, as you don't seem inclined to chip in—I will draw his advance pay. Twig?"

"But he'll come to before you can get him to Birkenhead or Liverpool and shipped."

"Again, old son, you undervalue my skill. Permit me to remind you that once in my shady past I was a doctor (or, to be more precise, an unqualified medical student), that being of course in the days before you and I met as comedians (as I think we called ourselves) on the Music Hall stage, which was before the period when we found it convenient to go foreign in a stokehold, which again was before we started picking up a livelihood in this present boat on the Mersey estuary."

"Oh, do get on, and don't drivel!"

"As a relic of one of my earlier professions, I invariably carry a hypodermic syringe, and a small but carefully selected collection of drugs. Two tubes in the waistcoat pocket contain all the lot. It always jars my nerves to read the rot that ignorant novelists churn out about doping an unwilling man by putting laudanum in his beer, when probably the beggar has a distaste for beer, and wouldn't drink it at your hands anyway. Now a little jab from a hypodermic needle, and your patient gets his dose whether he likes it or not; thinks probably that you have lurched up against him by accident and scratched him with a pin in your waistcoat; and, according to how that little dose is made up, he promptly proceeds to go off to sleep for a given period, or, if you so regulate it, he sleeps on to the end of time. It's neat, it's scientific, and it leaves no blundering traces for the fools of police to read from the outside, or for an interfering analyst to deduce from the contents of the gentleman's tummy."

"You are a devil!"

"I'll admit, if you like, old son, that I'm a distinct danger to society at present. But if society would combine together to provide me with a thousand a year—and see I didn't overspend it—why, I'd be an ornament to the British Isles, an unobtrusive, club-attending, well-dressed ornament, with strong views about the criminal classes, and a distinct talent for breeding prize fox-terriers. Don't try and splice that halliard. Knot it, and turn it end for end."

THE shabby man in the bows lifted the prostrate Mr. Kettle to an easier position. "He's as limp as a bit of chewed string. I believe you've killed him. Oh,——, Arthur! What shall we do next?"

"Make sure our passenger doesn't come to life again with unpleasant suddenness. He's a bit too limp for my taste. Here, I'll just give him a pinch of soothing syrup. Ha! I told you so. Catch hold of him from behind. Hit him over the head with the boat-hook. Well, hold him like that if you like then, till I get this quieter jammed into his thigh. Phew! Alfred, old son, that was a close call. The man's all steel springs with brass ends to them. He'd got me nearly strangled before I had him quieted off. There'll be a nice quiet stokehold somewhere whilst this little man's being taught to shovel coal!"

"Where are you going to put in shore? If he's to be shipped, I suppose Liverpool's best."

"I don't think. Liverpool, say you, and by your own showing you're a nervous man? There are more toughs in Liverpool than in any other seaport in the British Isles, and by consequence every Liverpool bobby has both eyes sticking about a foot out of his head looking for them. No, Alfred, I don't escort a gentleman with drooping head who has temporarily lost the use of his lower limbs down Liverpool streets at something past midnight, although he is got up in a uniform that hints he's a seafaring man. Which reminds me the aforesaid uniform is

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a heap too smart for the poor chap to wake up in and find himself in a stinkin' stoker's fo'c'sle. We must find him something more suitable. Can we draw on your wardrobe, old son?"

"I wish you'd stop your rotting."

"Of course, I'd forgotten. You've only the clothes you at present sit, or to be more accurate, sprawl in. And I'm in the same box. Of course we did agree, come to think of it, that the troup should travel light this tour. Bit of a dandy, isn't he, our friend the juggins? I'd like to change duds with him, but I'm afraid his are a bit too smart to dress my present part in; they'd call too much attention from the eyes of beauty, and so on; and as a further argument they're about half a mile too small for me."

"Well, we can't invent clothes. We shall have to tear and dirty these he's wearing."

"Not on your life! They represent meals for a week, or perhaps drink for a night. Old son, you mustn't get into this way of talking as if you were a millionaire. We shall be ashore in another ten minutes now. We'll leave his nibs here as boat-keeper when we've tied her to the wall, and if he's covered up with the lug-sail he'll lie snug and not attract attention, and then we'll toot off to the Masons' Arms, have just one Scotch apiece to wet the luck—they give you a big one for fourpence—and then buy the landlord's old gardening suit for the poor chap that's tumbled into the river and is afraid he's going to have another attack of rheumatism. Not a pal of ours by any means, but if a man doesn't look after his neighbor a bit in this world, who will?"

This program was carried out very much as it was arranged, except for the matter of one drink apiece. The caress of Scotch whisky on his tongue and palate was a thing the less bold of the two rogues never could resist, and numbers two, three and four followed the opening glass. The silent, sullen Alfred grew talkative, and the smart barmaid who sat at the receipt of custom more than once admonished him that that would do.

"'Oh, I am a pirate bold,'" sang Alfred; "'My shipmates they call me the Grogger; Fine plunder I've got in my hold, That I gathered right out on the Dogger.' Another glass of the same, please, miss."

"If you don't stop that noise," said the barmaid, "you'll have the landlord in, and I don't recommend him when he's disturbed from his supper."

"Let's have the Scotch, then."

"You've had enough. I'm sure you'd better do as your friend asks, and go out and take a walk."

"Yes, come along, William, old son."

"My name's not William, as you should know perfectly well by this time."

"Miss Dubbs," called a deep and fruity voice from behind the glass door.

"Coming, Pa," said the barmaid.

"No, don't come," boomed the voice, "but just tell them rowdies to get out. Tell 'em they're not our class here in the Snug. Tell 'em they'll be better served in our Jug and Bottle up the yard. Tell 'em they'll enjoy themselves better still at the Colliers' Rest down the street. Tell 'em I can see their clothes through the glass panel, Miss Dubbs, and 'ear all their low remarks through the woodwork. And tell 'em, Miss Dubbs, that I don't like either."

The barmaid had a sense of humor. She did not retransmit the message. She merely nodded her elaborate black head and remarked: "Now you've heard," and obviously looked upon the pair to make their exit. She was a deep-hipped, full-bosomed, strong-complexioned young woman, quite clearly able to take care of herself, and the shabby Alfred grasped all this in one muzzy glance and made toward the swing doors. His friend, however, put a hand on to his coat-tail and capsized him gently on to a bench.

"Now, don't you mind my friend George, miss. He's nothing further to say, have you, old son? There, you see, not a word. He's been suffering a good deal from exposure, and for that matter so have I, and the warmth of your bar and the whisky have made us forget what we came in for. Fact is there's a fellow outside down in our boat that's been overboard and got a bad chill. He's T. T. and won't take drink, so we offered to find him a dry suit of clothes. D'ye think the guv'nor's got such a thing to dispose of?"

"No," said the big bass voice at the other side of the glass door.

"Of course, so far as our means go we wish to pay. It would be a charity if you could find something. The poor chap's had rheumatic fever once."

Again the big voice made the glasses tingle. "Ma says they can have my old garden clothes for two half-crowns, Miss Dubbs. No, call it three and six, and they

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have to replace the missing buttons themselves."

"Well?" said the barmaid.

"That's a deal," said Arthur the seedy. "You fetch them, my dear."

"I'm not your dear," said Miss Dubbs pointedly, "and it's not my place to do upstairs work. Besides, I can't leave the bar." She pulled a bell smartly. "I'll tell the servant to fetch them for you. I think your friend's going out. Perhaps you'd like to go with him."

"I'll sit beside him on that nice comfortable oak bench, and then you'll see he'll be perfectly satisfied. Perhaps, as you've gone so far as to ring that bell for the menial, you'd ask her when she comes to have a couple of good thick threepenny sandwiches put up for us."

"Sandwiches are fourpence apiece at this house."

"We can eat the extra pennyworth, my dear. Make them so."

THE barmaid retired into a novelette, and the clock ticked loudly in lieu of conversation. Alfred at intervals seemed inclined to snore, and when he did his companion shook him viciously and (as the barmaid who was quietly watching the pair in the glass at the back of the bar thought) nervously. The barmaid was a very healthy, unimaginative person with, as befitted her calling, a good deal of experience of mankind, and, as she freely owned afterward, from the moment that the two shabby men had entered the door, she dimly gathered that there was something wrong about them. To start with, she anticipated that they would try to pass bad coin on her, or partake of refreshment and depart suddenly without paying for it. Or again they might have come in to steal ash-trays or to carry off the brass fire-irons by way of keepsake; and, even when none of these things happened, she was far from comfortable. She was convinced there was something unwholesome about them.

At last the sandwiches arrived, and huge unsightly hunks they were. The shabby men accepted them without complaint—and paid. The maid also brought the clothes unhandily tied up in a newspaper.

"Here's your three and six," said Arthur civilly.

"But don't you want to look them over first?"

"Oh, I guess they'll do," said the shabby man with the refined voice, and roused his shabby companion and with him went through the door and out into the night.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Miss Dubbs, and then, "Pa," she called through the glass doors, "will you please give an eye to the bar for a bit? I want to go up-stairs."

"Certainly, Miss Dubbs," boomed the big bass voice, and a dapper little man whose head came up to the level of the barmaid's chin trotted in to the bar parlor at one door as she swept out through the other.

Miss Emily Dubbs went to the coffee-room above, sat herself in the window, and pulled aside a corner of the blind. Outside, in the moonshine, the little strip of tidal harbor showed as clear as day, and across the pavement which led to it walked the two shabby men, arm in arm, with their purple shadows chasing them. When they got to the edge of the quay the one called Arthur sat his friend carefully on a bollard, and, when satisfied that he had acquired a balance, began to descend to a small boat whose position was shown by a mast that projected above the gunwale.

An impish inspiration seized upon Miss Dubbs and for a moment she laughed, and then she acted upon it. She lifted the sash of the window and then, drawing the blind still more closely toward the jamb so that only her mouth was exposed, she called out loudly for "*Police!*" and then again for "*Police!*" and then with a further shrill cry exclaimed "*Murder!*"

The effect was sufficiently startling. The shabby man who was sitting sprang up as though the bollard had suddenly stung him, and ran with ungainly strides up into the little town. The panic was infectious. Arthur from below clambered up over the stringpiece, called aloud upon the name of his Maker, and followed with precipitate pace. And where they went the present writer neither knows nor cares, but can only point out that from now onward they vanish from the pages of this memoir.

Equally strange to relate, the outcry raised no further disturbance. The houses on the quay remained deaf behind their shutters, and the town policeman (if indeed he heard) gave no sign, but after the manner of his tribe crunched stolidly along his beat and did not seek to ram a chivalrous helm into unnecessary disturbances.

Now to begin with, Miss Dubbs was dis-

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tinctly elated with the success of her alarm. Instinctively she had disliked the two shabby men, but as she had nothing definite against them her outcry might be described as in the main experimental. The result of it startled her, and, as she thought it over more, shook her. Idly she had cried "Murder!" and the men had run as though the Law itself were actually at their heels. She was a big young woman, and tightly encased in black satin, which leaves small space for the more violent emotions, but she caught herself shivering. Had murder been done?

She craned out of the window and looked up the street, and then she looked down. There was no one to call to her aid, no one to consult. For one fleeting instant she thought of the little man with the big voice and the big words down-stairs, and then dismissed the idea with a *poof!* Then she darted across to her own bedroom, hunted out an article of woolwork known as a "cloud," fitted it dexterously over her masses of black hair in front of the glass, and then ran nimbly down-stairs and out into the street.

Outside she did not run, because ladies never hurry, although for one thing and another she felt monstrously inclined to do so; but she walked her quickest and, looking behind, was thankful for the shadow that was kind enough to keep her company. In the course of forty steps she stood upon the string-piece of the quay and looked down at an untidy, weather-beaten boat below. On the floor of it, partly coverd with a blackened sail, was a man. He was lying on his back, and his face was white under the moonshine and his eyelids were drooped but not fully shut. His red, torpedo beard probably accentuated the pallor of his face.

For the moment she thought him dead, and stood there stooping over the boat, fascinated. Then her eye lit on a ladder of iron rungs leading down from the string-piece, and she dropped on to her knees and clambered down it into the boat. She was a fine, strapping young woman with a good wholesome nerve and all of the feminine instinct for protection. She was pretty well certain that the man was dead, but she did not shrink from him. She put her hand on his head, discovered on the instant that he lived, and then for the first time felt an impulse to cry out. But she kept this back, sat on one of the boat's thwarts, gathered the man on to her lap, and spoke to him.

In reply he groaned very, very faintly. She could just hear the sound, and leaned her ear to his lips in case he could form his last wishes into words.

"If you—could kill—that untidy fellow—Arthur—I'd be obliged to you."

"Certainly," was her brisk reply. "But for the present you must get out of this boat and come up to the house. You're near perished to death with cold. Do you think you can climb up if I help you?"

He obviously could not. He had slipped back into unconsciousness again, and her gentle shaking could not rouse him. So with an effort she took him in her arms and then, standing up, hove him on to the string-piece of the quay above. And then, panting with exertion and excitement, followed to the upper level herself. And then once more whipping her arms underneath him, she carried him sturdily across the moonlit stones and through the doorway of the Mason's Arms.

CHAPTER X

MR. KETTLE AND MISS DUBBS

"PEOPLE have no idea," said Miss Dubbs, "how careful us bar-ladies have to be. People seem to think that because we can be affable with boys that come in for a glass and a chat we're the same to everybody. I'm not denying, too, that there may be bar-girls in some of the smaller establishments who are a bit common. But in a respectable house such as this you can bet that a girl knows her place and keeps it, and if she didn't the Guv'nor would very soon show her what's what."

"I notice," said Mr. Kettle, "that you call him Pa. Any relation?"

"No more'n I am to you. All the village calls him Pa, and the old lady Ma, for that matter, and as they seem to like it, I follow their example. Relation indeed! I should think not! My people are very different style. I don't tell it to everybody, but as you are a sort of friend by now, Captain, I may tell you in confidence that my father's a minister."

"I don't see why you should say a 'sort of' friend. I know that after all you've done for me I feel that you are about the best friend I've got. But then I suppose——"

"You suppose what?"

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"You're accustomed to being kind to people."

"If you mean that I'm in the habit of going out just before closing-time and picking up drugged young men out of boats and carrying them across here and putting them into apartments they haven't ordered, you're mistaken."

"Kick me, and you'll find I'll take it lying down."

"Well, I didn't mean to be unkind, Captain, but you must admit that you brought it on yourself. I know you gentlemen think that because a girl's in business behind a bar she can't keep herself select. But you never made a greater mistake in your lives. I'll tell you why. Between customers, during the slack times of the day, we have time for reading, and so naturally we pick up a lot that other business ladies don't have a chance of learning. Look at this novel by Charles Garvice. Now what that man doesn't know about life in the higher circles is obviously not worth knowing."

"Which was your father's denomination?"

"Methodist New Connexion."

"Mrs. Farnish, who brought me up, was a Bible Christian. Captain Farnish after some voyages was a strict Wesleyan, and after others he was a Plymouth Brother. And once he said he thought he'd turned Spiritualist, but it didn't last."

"And yourself, Captain?"

"Well, between ourselves, miss, I see points in them all, and perfection in none of them. My own idea is that a man doesn't take up religion at all heartily till he's married, and for myself I think it'll be something that combines the good points of all of them and yet is a creed distinct and apart. And I think it ought to have a smack of the country in it. Have you ever been in Wharfedale?"

"I can't say I have."

"I was there once for a week when I was a boy, and I have never forgotten it—grass slopes and limestone hills and moors on top of them: just the spot for a new religion. When I can afford it and am able to retire from the sea, I should like to set up on a farm there and found the Wharfedale Particular Methodists."

Miss Dubbs clasped her hands. "What a noble work!"

The sailor took a grip on his courage. "Are you firmly convinced about the New Connexion?"

"I must say it has points, many points, though on some of their circuits the arrangements for the minister are disgusting, and the things they expect his family to do are out of all reason. But since I left home and went into business, of course I've been into other places of worship, and naturally they opened my eyes to the fact that there are other possibilities outside the New Connexion."

"Miss," said the little sailor enthusiastically, "I never came across any one with your amount of sense in dealing with a question like this. In fact, the only lady I ever discussed the question with—well, she was a disappointment."

"And who was she, pray?"

"Passenger I came across once on a steamboat. Very attractive lady. But she didn't seem to know there was anything that counted outside the Church of England, except perhaps the Romans, and, as she said, it was her idea that fancy religions didn't amount to a hill of beans."

"Then I shouldn't call her a lady at all. I should call her a cat."

"Oh, she was a lady right enough. A lady by birth, too; her father was a baronet, and her brother wears the title now."

"Why didn't you say so, then?" said Miss Dubbs sharply. She was annoyed at being caught out in error. "Of course if she was a real lady of that sort, she would be bound to go to church."

"Then do you mean——"

Miss Dubbs nodded her elaborate black head impressively. "Never you mind what I do mean. You gentlemen who are officers at sea know a lot about the sun and the moon and stars and boilers and passengers and geography and all that. But let me tell you, you miss a heap. You don't read. You don't know anything about society, and what society does, and where it goes to worship."

"It goes where its convictions carry it."

WITH obvious difficulty Miss Dubbs held back her superior information. "It will be time enough for people like you or me, Captain, to think about changing over to—I mean to get ourselves into real society when we've a pile of money. And for the present, as you tell me you're out of a berth, I make no bones about telling you that as far as I am concerned my rich aunt shows at present no signs of dying and

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leaving me all her savings. In fact, she's even been so unkind as not to take the trouble to be born. I'm always hoping, of course, that some one will leave me a fortune; they always do in books, and it's cheering to look forward to the day when one will be rich; but for the present the salaries paid in our business are disgracefully small, and I tell you plainly it's as much as I can do to dress anything like respectably on mine, let alone buy the furs that a lady ought to have when she's in my position."

Mr. Kettle sighed deeply. "A lady like you will marry a rich man. You couldn't do justice to yourself on less."

Miss Dubbs bridled. "I hope my husband, if ever I have one, will some day become rich and powerful. But if any one was to suggest I should ever marry for money alone I believe I should forget I was a lady and use vulgar language. If you'd read at all, Captain, you'd know that Mister Charles —that all the best authorities tell you plainly that to marry for anything except love is simply to ask for trouble, and that last's a thing which yours sincerely is going to avoid if she knows it."

"Well, the Lord be thanked for that, though to tell the truth I didn't think you meant anything else. But, miss, on my part let me tell you something too. My idea of the matter runs like this: a man who asks a lady to marry him when he's got nothing but his ticket, and no money in hand, and no billet to go to, deserves a suit of tar and feathers. Mark, I'm speaking only of the business of the sea, because that's all I know about. But you can take it from me, miss, that its uncertainness can only be described as beastly. A man may to-day have the best kind of prospects imaginable; he may be known as a smart driving mate, good ship's husband, good navigator; and to-morrow, through no fault of his own, except that he honestly carried out his duty, he's—as a mate or a master —blacklisted to all eternity. That's the British mercantile marine!"

From down the stairway a great voice boomed: "Miss Dubbs, bar, please."

"There's Pa—well, the Guv'nor if you like. I must be going. I'm three minutes past my time as it is, and he's nuts on punctuality."

"Half a minute, miss. I saw an accordion in the private room at the back of the Snug. Who plays?"

"Oh, Pa thinks he does. But singing's his strong suit. He really can sing—if one cares to listen to those deep 'Sailors' Grave' things that come right from the boots."

"Would an accompanist please him?"

"Why, can you play?"

"Better than most. I've every tune in the 'Young Methodist's Hymnal Companion' off by heart, and I can improvise as well. You find me, miss, in a bit of a desperate strait. I've lost my billet and I'd no more sense than to let a brace of mud pirates rob me of all my ready money, and so I must put modesty aside and say what I can do, and accordion-playing's one of the big items."

Miss Dubbs tucked an encouraging hand under Mr. Kettle's arm. "You come down with me, Captain. I'll put you on the ground floor with Pa inside three minutes."

The landlord, as was natural, was skeptical at first, talked of accordion players he had known who were "equal to Padri-whiskey and Mahryall," and spoke of the risk and strain to his voice in singing to an inefficient accompanist. But Mr. Kettle had the instrument in hand by this time, had run his fingers over the keys, and presently was playing such a soothing improvisation to the little man's recitative that presently the monologue stopped, and the small fist rattled the glasses on the table.

"By Jings, Captain, you're a take-in! I thought you were a tinpot amytoor. Why, you're a bloomin' pro! I see what we're in for, and that's an evening of 'armony. Miss Dubbs, kindly take the Captain's order. Mine's the usual. And Ma will have a red port wine. And now, Captain, if you'll kindly do what you can with the 'Bay of Biscay,' key of E flat, I'll supply the rest."

The concert took place in the inside private parlor, in an atmosphere that was entirely unventilated and rich with the mingled odors of tobacco-smoke and toasted cheese, and as the glass door into the Snug was hospitably left open, that latter apartment was crowded with an appreciative audience who rapped approval of each successive item with sticks, feet and tumblers. Miss Dubbs pumped beer and drew whisky till her strong right arm was wearied, and when eleven o'clock and turning-out time arrived, there was a unanimous vote against any Government that laid down arbitrary

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laws as to when a gentleman should leave enjoyment and go home to bed.

"By Jings!" said the landlord hoarsely as he locked the front door on the last customer's heels and kept the balance of the atmosphere from escaping. "By Jings, I've not had such a night since we opened here! This has got to be repeated. The customers will expect it. Miss Dubbs, we'll take a Dock and Joris and I dare say you'd like a Cream de Mint yourself. Captain, as we say in the Lodge, here's 'Round the Neck.'"

CHAPTER XI

A NEW BERTH

CAPTAIN KETTLE stayed in free quarters at the Mason's Arms for a week, and at the end of that period found a job as timekeeper on a railroad extension works. The camp was some considerable number of miles away, and the employment was thoroughly distasteful to him; he ached to be back again at sea; but with scandal (as he was convinced) awaiting him in Liverpool, he chose the safer part and prepared to lie low till the air had cleared again.

On Saturday midday he was officially free, but in effect had to spend all the afternoon and most of the evening writing up books, and on alternate Sundays some of the gangs worked overtime and he had to be on watch to check the hours to be paid for. His predecessor in the post, being a high-minded British workman, had decided he would be no man's slave and had handed in his resignation in a manner that insured its instant acceptance. But to Mr. Kettle the hours were light enough. When engaged in his own profession, as a modern mate, he had taken it for granted that he had to work seven days a week whether in harbor or at sea, and for most of the twenty-four hours of each of those days, so that with a training like that at his back any shore duty was likely to come light enough. His main trouble was that the distance and these lengthy hours made it practically impossible for him to slip away and see Miss Dubbs at Foston.

Save on his pay he could not. He was not extravagant. He liked his glass of beer and his pipe of tobacco, and though these were practically his only luxuries, it took practically every penny he earned barely to live. The reason was simple. He had spent all his grown life at sea, where food and lodging are provided as part of the scheme of life, and he had none of a landsman's training in buying these things for himself.

Moreover, and this was very typical of him, he was always conscious of holding a master's certificate and was very sensitive about living in any style which he conceived to be below a shipmaster's dignity. There are very strict sumptuary laws about these matters, and even if he had felt any inclination to give way on small points of etiquette, owing to force of existing circumstances, the thought of Miss Emily Dubbs in the background always kept him up to the most exacting letter of the sea rubric.

Miss Dubbs had swelled out her chest when she laid down the law on the matter, and had spoken with no uncertain voice. "If I was an officer," said she, "I'd be a officer. If I knew I was a Captain, and I was down on my luck, and I went into a house of call starving, and they asked me to kindly step into the kitchen and take my meal there, d'you think I'd do it? Not me! I'd starve first. Why, it would be like asking a bar-lady to carry coals to a bedroom, or wheel out visitors' children in a perambulator!"

It was Miss Dubbs, in fact, who rescued Mr. Kettle from the railway extension and sent him to sea again; and the first news of her move was conveyed to the poor stranded sailor telegraphically.

To "Kettle Railwayworks Llandharmallic," it ran. "Come here immediate. Captaincy offers. Will expect you 5.25 train. Miss Dubbs."

His request to the engineer in charge for leave on urgent private affairs met with a flat refusal, couched in language that invited the blow to follow up. The engineer, as a point of fact, was in mathematical trouble at the moment over the amount of spoil it would take to construct a certain "fill," and Mr. Kettle arrived in the office just in time to perform the function of whipping-boy.

But the mariner was taking no chances. "I'd been aching for weeks," he explained pathetically afterward, "for a chance to spread that engineer's nose across his face and send him home with his eye in a sling, and he knew it, and I make no doubt had taken his dirty precautions. I should have had time to have sewn him up all right, but the police would have been in

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by the end of the scrap, and I couldn't afford to waste a minute, much less risk a day. So I let him off, but please the Lord, I'll meet him sometime else, and attend to him in full."

So leaving his work entailed dismissal, and when once more he arrived at the Mason's Arms (this time with a small portmanteau) he was again in his previous condition of being out of employ.

Miss Dubbs leaned across the top of the bar and shook his hand with her best air. "I was all of a-twitter to think you wouldn't be able to get away. It's Sir George who offers the job and he'll wait for no man. 'Bring your skipper up to the scratch at six o'clock to-night,' says he, 'and I'll look him over. But if he isn't here by then he needn't come, because I shall run up to Liverpool after that and get one of the proper shipping people to find me a master.'"

"Well, I'm here, miss, and my certificates are all that an owner can ask for. You didn't happen to hear what the ship was and where she was for? Not that it matters. I'd command a floating dock bound for the North Pole, yes, and guarantee to take her there too, if an owner would sign me on for the job. But if you could give me a pointer on ahead, it might help in negotiations."

"The trouble is, I can't, Captain. You know what Sir George is—short and brisk and snappy. They'd been having a political meeting up in the coffee-room, and he came in here as usual for a word with Pa, with the Guv'nor, that is. You know he's our landlord—he's landlord of half the countryside, for that matter. Well, Pa asked him about the Flower Show—would he be president again this year? And Sir George laughed and said he expected he'd be in Morocco about flower-show time, if he could find a skipper for his boat. 'But skippers, they tell me, are hard to get at the moment,' says he, 'just, I suppose, because I happen to want one.'"

"'Excuse me, Sir George,' says I, 'but if that's all your trouble, I can find you a perfect captain.'

"'Ah,' says he, 'that sounds like business. And why's he out of a billet? Drink?'

"'Steadiest young man I know,' says I.

"'Any other qualifications?' he asks.

"'There's no captain can work a ship safer or more comfortable,' I says, and though I've never been at sea with you, Captain, I'm sure that's right. And then I added something about your skill in music. I said nothing about what you told me about poetry, because I thought that wouldn't help. But the music fetched him. 'The accordion is quite the finishing touch,' he says.. 'Send your man along,' he says, 'and I'll interview him.' And that's the lot, Captain. The agent came and fetched him then before I could get in another word, and perhaps as well."

"Miss," said the sailor, "I don't know how to thank you for what you've done."

"Then don't do it. I suppose a lady may do what she likes for her own particular friends, and I never heard any law as to why she mayn't have men friends as well as the usual lady friends."

"You might tell me who Sir George is."

"Why, bless me, yes! I thought you knew. He's the big man round here, and a tip-top good sort. Head of everything from the cricket club down to the county council; member of parliament for the division; and a real popular landlord in spite of the fact that he owns half the countryside. They say he gets his pound of flesh all right in rents, but if any one meets with a lump of hard luck and can't pay, and Sir George hears about it, it's always 'My good man, don't let your bit of debt to me spoil your sleep. Wipe it off, and try and do better next half-year. Tell your Missis I'm sending her down a couple of brace of pheasants.'"

"Sounds a good sort."

"So you'd think. So I do think. He's the nicest great gentleman I know, and you'll find no one in Foston to give him a bad word. But there's one they say can't get on with him—or else it's him that can't stand her."

"Trouble with his wife?"

"Captain, I don't talk scandal. But this is a business matter, and as I am a business lady, and have put you on to it, I think it's right you should know. Her Ladyship's Sir George's little cross, and if she can't get on with a man like that, my opinion of her is that she's no better than she ought to be. But there's no getting over the fact that she leads him a dog's life of it when she's down here at the Hall, and when she's in London, by what one reads in the papers, her goings on are too rapid to be respectable.

"She's on the Riviera at present, gambling away our rents at Monte Carlo, and if Sir

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George wants to be safely off on a yachting trip by the time she gets back to England, I'm sure I'm not blaming him. And mark you, Captain, as I've told you more than once, my idea is that when a man marries a lady he should as a rule stick to her whether, in the words of the Bible, she turns out better than he expected, or worse than he dared to hope. But her ladyship's the limit, and if poor Sir George chooses to take himself and his purse out of her reach, I'd be the last to blame him. Oh, my word, here he is! I do hope he hasn't heard us talking."

CHAPTER XII

SIR GEORGE EXPLAINS

SIR GEORGE CHESTERMAN, as Mr. Kettle saw him then, was a burly, upstanding, tired-looking man of five-and-forty. He wore baggy, weather-beaten country clothes, and had a face browned and lined by the wind and the sun. He had a retriever and a fat spaniel at his heels, and the easy manner of a man accustomed every day to meet all grades of the population.

"Well, Miss Dubbs, here I am prompt to the hour, you see. And so you've managed to bring your nautical friend up to the scratch?" he nodded pleasantly. "You two haven't wasted much time either."

"Yes, this is Captain Kettle, Sir George."

"Then suppose we sit down and see what we can arrange. I understand that you've let the sea look after itself for the last year or so, Captain, and taken a turn at civil engineering?"

"I've been on the railroad works as timekeeper, sir, a very subordinate position, for just five months. I met with a little misfortune, sir, at sea, which I'd rather not explain unless you press for it, but it had nothing to do with my own professional competency, and my ticket was not dealt with, and indeed no inquiry was held that I ever heard about. There are my certificates, sir, if you care to look at them."

"We'll take them as read for the present. I'm afraid I must speak in rather a guarded way for the time being. You see, I don't know you, and, for that matter, you don't know me. Indeed, to begin with, I may as well tell you that this is no ordinary humdrum trip that I've got in mind. It will be a case of sailing from here in a small steamboat with sealed orders, and from a professional point of view I don't see that it can possibly lead up to much in the way of promotion after the job is done."

"That doesn't sound very encouraging, sir. You see, I'm young, and I don't want to get any marks on my ticket."

"You'd be a fool if you did. Moreover, here's another point; the business anyway will be risky and very possibly will be highly dangerous."

Mr. Kettle squared his shoulders. "You needn't bring that into the account, sir," he snapped. "As I never suffered from nervousness as a mate, it isn't likely I should begin to shake at the knees if you're kind enough to promote me to be skipper. In fact," he added with a little sigh, "when troubles come along, it's mostly like meat and drink to me."

Sir George laughed rather hardly. "I should have thought that under existing circumstances you wouldn't want too much excitement to season your every-day meal. You ought to hanker after a humdrum, steady-going job with the maximum of screw and the minimum of risk."

"I know I should, sir, I know I should. But I can't help the way I'm built, however much I may regret it. Is the business gun-running?"

"I hadn't thought of that, though we might add it as a side-issue. No, in one word, Captain, it's salvage. The story's a bit of an unlikely one, though I've gathered it happens with regularity at least twice or thrice a year. A steamer was coming home from a foreign port, and cargo shifted. As a point of fact she was loaded with copper matte—copper concentrates, if you like it better—worth some thirty-five pounds a ton, and she'd four thousand three hundred tons dead weight of it on board. If you work that out, you get into big figures in pounds sterling."

"£150,500," said Miss Dubbs, who by reason of her exacting profession was of necessity a lightning calculator.

"Good. And then you must add on anything between £20,000 and £60,000 for the steamer according to the condition in which one finds her. Well, Captain, she's been reported a total loss, and Lloyds have paid on her as such. The whole tale's quite understandable, I'm told."

"Quite. A breeze came on, a breeze abeam, and the old man daren't put her

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nose on to it because the Chief told him that if she raced badly, either her engines would tie themselves up in knots or else she'd drop her propeller overboard. So he kept her plugging along her course, and she rolled so badly that presently the cargo began to shift. That gave her a list to leeward, and every sea that hit her on the tall side sent more cargo sagging over, and the list got worse. The cargo being the copper ore you speak about, sir, they probably got hands down below to do a bit of trimming, and when she rolled men got thrown down to leeward, and the heavy lumps fell in cascades down on top of them till most of them were crushed into a kind of pink beef jelly, and the rest cleared out on deck, and neither guns nor belaying-pins could drive them below again."

"You seem to know the symptoms, Captain."

"You see, sir, I was shipmaster with shifted cargo myself once. Coal it was."

"Well?"

"Oh, we got a tarpaulin on her aft, and that blew her stern round still she'd answer to the helm and show her other side to the sea, and that trimmed her again. Lord, but when that coal did cascade across I thought it would have gone slap through her rotten old plates into the North Sea!"

"Well, and what about the threatened ore boat?"

"Oh, they didn't know enough to get her round, or tried and couldn't do it, or the old coffee-mill broke down and she lost her way and kept getting badly swept, or a dozen other things might have happened. But anyway the crew decided they hadn't sufficient interest on board to stay there and get drowned, and they made off in the boats, and whether the after-guard were weak-backed enough to go with them, you know, sir, better than I do."

"I'm afraid I can't tell you. But I gather the tale fell out much as you have told it, only the boats got swamped, and so far as I know only one man escaped drowning. He, as it happened, poor chap, was a cousin of mine, who'd kicked rather badly over the traces and had found it convenient to disappear. He was drifting homeward again, it seems, in this boat's stokehold, and was very pleased with himself because after hammering about the seas for three years as a trimmer, he had at last been promoted to being a full-blown fireman. You see, he'd once been a doctor with a very good practise, and just made the one mistake and—well that won't interest you. Anyway, there he was. He got picked up by a South American beef boat when it was too late to be of use to him. He knew himself to be dying, and he'd seen every other man jack of his boat's crew go under before the ship turned up which found him.

"But here's the rum part of the tale. Before he died he wrote me a letter, which in due time was delivered. He said he wrote to me because in the past I'd been rather decent to him over a certain matter, and in return he wanted to put me in possession of a neat little fortune. He guessed (I suppose with a sick man's canny knowledge of such things) that his own steamer would be given up as a total loss, and he wrote to say that, barring the loss of boats and some superstructure, she was as sound as a bell, and her cargo not a penny the worse for its churning."

"H'M," said Mr. Kettle, "if your trip is to go hunting for an ore-laden derelict, sir, that's roaming about the seas as wind and currents direct, of course you may find her, if you can get in somewhere to coal often enough, and your patience holds out; or again you may not."

"Wait a bit, Captain. You've only heard Chapter One of the tale. Chapter Two tells how she got embayed snugly behind certain islands which fringe a savage coast."

"Ah," said Mr. Kettle, "I don't wish to speak disrespectfully about any gentleman that was a cousin of yours, sir, but are you sure, sir, that this one wasn't seeing the visions and the geography of New Jerusalem before he finally pegged out?"

"Of course there is that reading. But at any rate his yarn is circumstantial. Listen, and tell me if there are any bad technical breaks. He says that when they put off there was a very heavy sea running, and the boat, which had been badly stove in the lowering, soon swamped. The air-chambers kept her afloat, but before daybreak the sharks and the seas had eased her of half her people. Sometimes she floated right way upward, sometimes wrong, and on the whole they had (he says) a roughish trip of it. The amazing part of it was that in the morning there was the steamer, righted, and

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apparently little the worse for her bucketing, and only a mile away from them; and beyond again was the shore of Africa, with a fine line of noisy spouting reefs guarding it.

"The steamer and the swamped boat were in tow of a good brisk current, but the steamer was highest out of the water, and, when the wind got her, drifted fastest. She got nearer and nearer to the reefs, and at last amongst them, and my poor old cousin watched to see her strike and go smash. But in some way she navigated clear of the rocks, though he said there was a regular graveyard of them, and he clearly saw her afloat on the smooth water inside.

"Then after that the tide changed, or the current changed—you know what twiddly things currents are, Captain—and the swamped lifeboat got drawn out seaward again. And poor Fred seems to have had a pretty hazy notion of what happened between then and the time when the beef boat picked him up. It was all a muddle of sun and birds and thirst and fellows dying and more birds trying to pick his eyes out, and trouble about some lady patients coming to see him in his consulting-room in Harley Street at home. And when at last he was hauled in out of the wet he'd a dose of angina pectoris, which, as he said, gave him due warning, and he'd just time to write this letter I told you of before another attack came along and (as the Captain of the Argentina boat wrote to me) finished him off. So there's the tale, and I want to know what you think of it."

"I don't ask you to tell me more than you wish, sir, but the first thing I want to point out is, there's a lot of coast-line to Africa. Did he mark off a likely bit?"

"He did."

"And is it likely to be disturbed? You said, if you remember, it was savage."

"I should say that local effort has looted anything it fancied off the derelict, but if you come to add that up it probably won't amount to more than a few hundred pounds' worth. Tramp steamers of the brand that are chartered to carry ore are not usually fitted out with guns and swords and other tackle that would attract the savage eye. As for the copper matte, I can imagine their cursing when they got the hatches off and went down to have a look at it."

"And what about any other boat running in there and sighting her and towing her off and claiming salvage, so that when you get there you would find the harbor bare?"

"If she had been found, Lloyds would have been notified. They haven't, and as a matter of fact I have bought up all claims. If I told you the spot, you would recognize at once that it is clear of all steam lanes, and there is not the smallest possibility of any craft blundering into that part of the coast and finding her."

"Then, sir, it seems to me you've got a cinch, and if you'll employ me as master of your salvage steamer, I'd be proud to undertake the business for you."

Sir George pulled rather a rueful face. "Do you believe in luck, Captain?"

"I believe that every man makes for himself the luck he deserves."

"That makes it rather worse, because I'm free to own up to you that luck at present seems to have deserted me entirely, and as I'm going with this expedition myself for—well, for reasons—I should say the odds are I shall act as Jonah and wreck it."

"Sir," said Captain Kettle warmly, "don't you believe it for one instant! If you guarantee that the steamer's there and afloat, I'll guarantee to you, given a modest equipment, that I'll find her and bring her home. Yes, sir, the fact of your luck being down, and the trifle that half the tribes in Africa are showing their teeth and trying to keep her as their private yacht, won't stop me. Of course, this is always supposing you give me the job."

The big man's tired face lit up with a smile. He had a very taking smile. "After the enthusiasm you have shown I don't see that I have any choice. So if, in the teeth of all I've told you, you'll be good enough to accept the billet, it's yours to have. As regards pay, I don't know much about these matters and I can't afford to be extravagant, but I'll give you the standard rate of salary if you will let me know what that is, and I'll also arrange for you to have a slice of the plunder if we manage to do our salvaging successfully. I must go now, but if you'll meet me at the station at 9:15 tomorrow we'll run into Liverpool, and I'll get your advice on chartering a ship. So good-night for the present, and good-night to you also, Miss Dubbs."

"Well," said the barmaid presently, "if that isn't a gentleman, every inch of him, may I never wear a diamond ring! I can see it's been a strain to you, all this talk,

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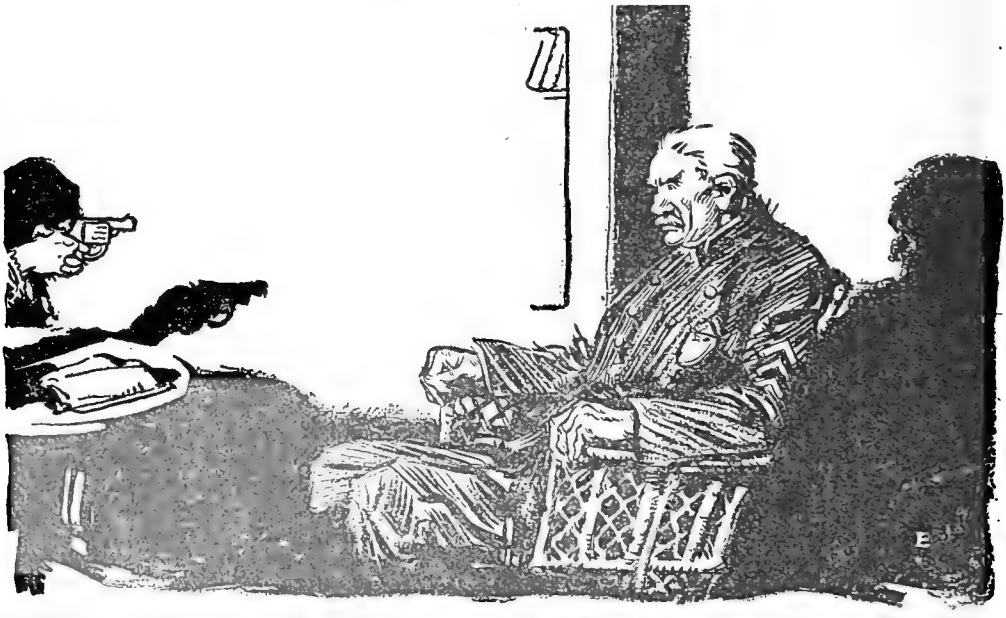
Captain, but you take it from me, you'll soon get used to him. Now you come into the Snug and smoke a quiet pipe."

"Miss," said the little sailor, "I'm going to show you something." He took an old, hard-seasoned, highly polished briar pipe from his pocket and looked at it thoughtfully. "Pipes," said he, "are all right for mates, and this one's been a very firm friend to me. But I'm a skipper now, and I must drop junior officers' ways. I've got to keep up the dignity of my position, and that means I've got to smoke cigars from now on."

With the poker he carefully skimmed away the black coals from the top of the fire and exposed a glowing cavern of red, and into this, carefully and reverently, he dropped the cherished pipe. It simmered for a moment or two, and then flame leaped from it. Captain Kettle found occasion to blow his nose with unnecessary violence, but Miss Dubbs, who was standing at his side, watching the cremation, patted his arm reassuringly.

"You were quite right, dear," said Miss Dubbs. "Now that you are a real captain, you must always remember to keep up your position."

TO BE CONTINUED



THE HYPNOTISM OF SERGEANT McCARTY

by P·C·MacFarlane

"HAVE ye heard of hypnotism, Dugan, as an aid to the detection of crime?" asked Sergeant McCarty, with cordial good humor as he ran casually through the bunch of papers which had just come in from the upper office.

"Hypnotism?" queried Officer Dugan. "How does it work?"

"With your eye, Dugan," confided McCarty.

"Can you do ut?" queried the patrolman, ever respectful of the resourcefulness of his superior officer.

"I can that!" affirmed the Sergeant modestly. "I read how last night in a book me boy, Mickie, has from the Carnegie Lib—— Hello, now! Hello! Hello! What's this?"

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The Sergeant's eyes were bulging and his stubby fingers were struggling with the turn of a fold of delicately tinted note paper that he held in his hand.

"Petticoats!" he exclaimed, in deep disgust. "Petticoats!" he snorted again, rubbing a great, freckled hand through the red stubble upon his head, while his dilated blue eyes stared indignantly at the communication before him. He shook the white, inoffensive missive angrily.

"Petticoats!" he muttered again, wrathfully. "When did I go up against 'em and win? They done me in the Martin case—sewed me up in a bag and left me throwed away in the street like a passay pussy. And now, after I worked forty-eight hours on Billie Regent's case, honest and hopeful, here comes the petticoats flouncin' in!"

Angrily Sergeant McCarty cast the disturbing letter upon his desk and strode savagely to the window, where he peered out, his hands behind him, his twiddling thumbs fluttering the skirts of his blue fatigue blouse.

"Dugan," McCarty boomed, turning suddenly, so suddenly that Dugan started with the uncanniness of it, "I never see a female link in a chain of evidence yet that it didn't bust!"

"Women is the weaker sect," observed Dugan sympathetically. "Have ye tried hypnotism?"

"No," said McCarty. "But 'tis a happy thought! If the occasion arises I will today hypnotize the petticoats."

It was an hour later when Sergeant McCarty, Dugan at elbow, rang the bell at one of the most fashionable fronts on Jackson Street and preferred his inquiries to the French maid, who opened the door just a little way and shut it again promptly with a bang, when she saw the blue coats and brass buttons.

"*Je ne sais pas!*" she squealed through the closing crack.

"Jennie-say-pa!" repeated Dugan, bewildered. "What does that mean?"

"Why, Dugan, I'm amazed at yer ignorance, man," replied Sergeant McCarty, quickly, being in a facetious mood. "'Tis French for 'You can search me.'"

"She don't know, then, whether Mrs. Bolton is in or not?" commented Dugan.

"Yes, Dugan, she knows, but 'tis the petticoat way. Petticoats proceeds by indirection. A woman will get a man into trouble with a flirt of her fan, and then she'll sell her soul to get him out of that same."

Sergeant McCarty planted his stocky thumb upon the push-button at the door and leaned against it long and insistently.

"*Mon Dieu!*" exploded the little lady as she reopened the door. "Again? Have I not shut you ze door in your face once?"

"But ye will not again," observed McCarty, thoughtfully inserting the thick sole of his shoe in the crack.

THE situation was favorable to conversation, but the pinched face, the shrill voice, the voluble tongue of the white-capped little lady from Paris, her eyes ablaze, her cheeks rosy with passion, and her words hot and burning, were too much for the Sergeant of Police. He held his ground, but looked dismayed.

"Is it a phonygraft," queried Dugan, from behind, "or a French Punch and Judy show?"

"No; 'tis a lady conversin' wid us," replied the Sergeant.

"What is she remarkin?" asked Dugan.

"I dunno," said McCarty, scratching his jaw meditatively. "I left me dictionary at home. If I had me butterfly-net I would catch some of them words, though, and look 'em up when I got in."

Suddenly the flow ceased.

"Quick!" whispered Dugan. "She's reachin' for more wind."

McCarty tackled on the instant.

"I want to see Madame," he observed, with his accent where it belonged. "She wrote me a communication to call." Here he exhibited the bit of woven linen, showing clearly enough the Bolton monogram.

The maid scanned it swiftly, breathlessly. Madame's own stationery! She recognized it instantly. And Madame's own handwriting! Amazing!

"Oh, la, la!" she exclaimed involuntarily.

"There's one," chimed in Dugan excitedly. "'La-la.' What does that mean?"

"Hush!" said McCarty. "Am I running a kindergarten? 'Tis French for what the Scotchman means when he says, 'Hoot, mon!'"

And now, the maid, having completely devoured with her eyes the piece of notepaper without being able to read a word of it, but also having had time to reflect and be impressed, which was what Sergeant

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McCarty was waiting for, said, with an appealing glance,

"But Madame is not up yet."

"Then," responded the Sergeant ingratiatingly, "we will come in and wait for her to get up. 'Tis important—something she desired to see me about. You've heard of Sergeant McCarty, my gur-r-rl!"

Evidently she had. The door swung easily back, and with an air of satisfaction Sergeant McCarty entered the hallway, closely followed by Officer Dugan.

The maid had fallen on silence. She showed the two men into the library.

"I will tell Madame," she squeaked, and was gone.

"Take the hall," ordered McCarty.

Dugan stepped to the door, where his eye swept up and down the hall both ways. Sergeant McCarty made a hasty inventory of the library, espying the writing-table, and on it stationery like that he held in his hand. The waste-basket, too, was inspected.

"The maid!" muttered Dugan.

"Madame will receive you in her boudoir." She smiled and conducted them up a broad staircase, along a hall and into a large room, done in pink or rose—walls, curtains and floor.

"Looks like a strawberry ice cream soda," muttered McCarty to Dugan, as his feet sank into the pink velvet carpet.

At one side of the room were an alcove and curtains, and beyond the curtains the voice of Madame could be heard addressing herself to a maid who, judging by the remarks, was dressing my lady's hair. My lady's tones were irritable.

"Madame will see you in a few minutes," said the maid, "but she will be in negligée."

"Her temper, too, appears to be negligée," muttered McCarty, under his breath.

A few minutes later a lady appeared between the curtains. She was wearing some wonderful butterfly affair, made up in long plaits that fell from the shoulder to the floor and responded to every move of her sinuous form. Her cheeks were pale and went into mourning beneath eyes that were brown and burned with a petulant light. Dark, curly hair was massed high upon her forehead. She stood for a moment, looking at the two men.

"Maybe she wouldn't be quick on the trigger!" Dugan murmured, gazing with frank admiration.

"Go below and take the hall," ordered McCarty nervously. The lady was a high-strung creature. His Irish self-complacency did not permit him to feel that she was irritated over a call from him. It must be Dugan. Therefore, the rollers for Dugan. Dugan departed reluctantly, giving his superior a reproachful look as he disappeared.

It took some minutes for all this to happen, and as for the lady, she still stood viewing her visitor with evident displeasure.

"Your business must be very urgent, indeed," she said sharply, "that you intrude yourself upon me at this hour!"

"I come about the letter, ma'am," Sergeant McCarty countered, with his usual directness.

"The letter!" gasped the lady, her self-assurance failing so quickly that McCarty saw how completely it had been put on.

"Yes. You wrote a letter to the Chief of Police. You know who dined with Billie Regent the night he died?"

MRS. BOLTON sank into a chair and clasped her hands nervously. The color came and went in her cheeks. Her bosom heaved under her downcast eyes.

"I was very foolish to write that letter," she said. "But I suppose I may as well tell you the truth about it." A shamed blush mantled her pale face. "The fact is, I was angry with James, childishly so, and in a fit of pique I wrote that letter to embarrass him; that was all. And since, we have made it all up and I do not wish to cause him any further annoyance, so I will not tell who it was."

"Then it was your husband who took Mr. Regent to the Poodle Dog to dinner on the night of his death?"

Mrs. Bolton was startled. She hesitated and her face went scarlet again. It was exactly what she had not meant to tell. It was this information she flattered herself she was concealing, and yet she could see now that the form of her explanation allowed of no other construction than that it was her husband who dined with William H. Regent, and that it was this fact she meant to communicate in order to cause him embarrassment. She did the only thing a wife who wished now to be loyal could do, under the circumstances. She lied.

"No!" she declared. "Of course it was not he!"

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"Blanche Bolton! You know it was!" declared a heavy female voice with a strange metallic ring in it that was almost uncanny.

"Why, mother, how you startled me!" exclaimed Mrs. Bolton, arising to confront the gaunt figure of a woman who had entered and stood holding the curtains aside, her strong, dark face tipped back and her chin poised imperiously.

Sergeant McCarty knew Mrs. Bolton's mother by reputation, well enough. She was Mrs. J. D. Morgan, widow of an old Comstocker, who, after her husband's death, had herself been a daring participant in the strife of those stirring times when fortunes were made in a day and lost in a night. Rumor said she had once killed a man whom she caught robbing her ore-dumps.

Now, gaunt, grizzled, gray, eccentric, a relic of a day that was gone, she survived in a sort of solitary grandeur, entirely without social intimates, looking after her mortgages and bonds, having an occasional fling at the stock market and nursing, to the point of mania, a bitter hatred of her son-in-law, James Bolton, who, indeed, was a correct, colorless sort of chap. She lived in his house, having some rooms assigned to her on the upper floor, where she brooded out her days, perched apart like an eagle on a crag.

Turning her steady gaze on McCarty, she said flatly: "It was Jim Bolton who dined with Billie Regent the night he met his death!" She was still speaking in those eerie, metallic tones.

"How do you know?" queried Sergeant McCarty.

"Because I pay a waiter in the Poodle Dog to keep an eye on this lazy young rascal and report to me when he is there and who he is with."

"What is the waiter's name?"

"Gus."

"Gus?"

McCarty had sweated a waiter named "Gus," and he was the sleepiest-headed know-nothing of the entire lot. If this were true, he was resolved to get that Gus and hammer him judiciously with some convenient instrument until he ceased to regard a lie to a police sergeant as something lightly to be sponsored.

"Does Gus make written reports to you?"

"Yes."

"Can you show me a written report in which he states that your son-in-law dined there on Tuesday night, with W. H. Regent?"

"I can, and the same report notes the finding of the dead body."

Sergeant McCarty turned toward the wife.

"Is your husband here?" he asked abruptly.

"Why, yes," answered Mrs. Bolton, taking on a still more frightened look.

"Will you call him?"

"Certainly."

She rang for the butler and dispatched him to the apartments of her husband.

"I suppose you will be annoying my husband with a lot of bothersome questions," commented Mrs. Bolton, her foot tapping nervously upon the bear's head on the rug at her feet.

"Not here," said McCarty abruptly; "at the station."

"At the station?" she exclaimed, in startled tones.

"Yes; I am going to place your husband under arrest."

"Under arrest?" she gasped. "Under arrest? Upon what charge?"

"For murder," answered the Sergeant shortly.

"Murder!" the woman half shrieked. "Murder! Why, man, are you crazy? My husband did no murder!"

Her terror and distress were pitiful. It pierced McCarty's heart to see it, to cause it, but this was in the way of his duty. When she was disturbed, nervous, discomposed, he plumped this statement with brutal suddenness, in the belief that she would be thereby tempted into still other admissions, if there were such to be made.

BUT there was another element in the situation — the mother-in-law, who suddenly turned on McCarty like a tigress. Having got her daughter's husband into trouble with a flirt of her fan, as it were and to quote McCarty, she now seemed disposed to get him out again if she could, despite her hatred of him.

"You fool!" she hissed in McCarty's face. "My son-in-law is not a murderer. He hasn't got sense enough. Even if he wanted to, he'd be always putting it off."

And just then Mr. James Bolton, a well-groomed, full-faced young man of thirty but looking older, entered the room.

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"What's the row?" he asked with a bored air.

He was dressed for the street, even to gloves and stick, which, with his hat, he held in one hand, while with his right he nursed a cigarette. His wife had flown to meet him. With one arm upon his shoulder, standing between him and the Sergeant of Police, she looked back and said:

"This is Sergeant McCarty. He comes to arrest you for murder—the murder of Billie Regent!"

"Oh, my God!" gasped Bolton, looking concerned. "How did he know I was there? Say, Sergeant, honest, old man, I don't know anything about it. Old Billie just seemed to kind of go to sleep over his coffee, you know, and as I had another engagement, I slipped out without disturbing him. I was horrified to learn of his death in the papers the next morning."

"If you are telling me the truth, why didn't you make it known immediately?" asked McCarty, his keen blue eyes regarding Bolton severely.

"Why—why—that was where I made a mistake," stammered the man. "It was so deuced peculiar, you know. It gave me a sort of creepy feeling when I read it, and I was going to report it, but delayed the matter, and then I heard about the coroner's inquest, and I was in a peculiar position, you know, by that time. They would ask the same question you ask me now."

Bolton's pallor deepened, and his voice sank to a whisper as he saw, in a moment, the position in which his explanation placed him. He would not be believed. What had been an innocent act in itself had come now to have a significance that might be fatal.

"Dugan!" called McCarty, stepping out into the upper hall. "Ring for the wagon."

"The wagon!" gasped Bolton, quite overcome, but still determined to deport himself quietly, as became a blasé gentleman of birth and breeding.

"Yes, the patrol wagon," explained Sergeant McCarty.

"Oh, my God, no!" he exclaimed huskily. "Not that, Sergeant; not that! I've been a fool, been indiscreet, don't you know, old chap, but not any more than that."

"You have to come with me," said the Sergeant.

"Say, old man," pleaded Bolton again, "don't do that! I beg of you, don't. I couldn't bear the disgrace of it. Let me go down on the car with you. And don't let it seem as if I were in custody. Just let us get on and sit in different seats, only we'll get off at the station. Or, no—why, we'll drive down in my own runabout! It's at the door now. They'll only think I've been pulled for speeding or something like that. Do that, Sergeant, won't you?"

Mr. Bolton was displaying a great deal of real concern as he urged his plea.

"For the sake of my wife, won't you?"

Mrs. Bolton still had her arm about her husband's neck. Her great brown eyes, luminous, swimming with liquid light, fixed on the Sergeant in mute appeal, ably seconded her husband's request.

"You could do that, couldn't you, Sergeant?" she asked, with a sob in her voice.

"Of course he'll do it!" declared the metallic tones of Mrs. Morgan in a matter-of-fact way.

McCarty started and looked at her abruptly, again feeling that strange, uncanny spell of hers. She had read his thought and carelessly announced it before he was ready to do so himself. For there was no use to be brutal, and Sergeant McCarty had made up his mind to let Dugan take Mr. Bolton down in the latter's car.

"Dugan," he called down the stairs again, "never mind the wagon! Mr. Bolton's coming down. Get in his car with him and go down to the station. I'll come along when I get through up here."

"Thank you so much!" murmured Mrs. Bolton, her eyes all teary.

"Awfully kind of you, old chap, I assure you," declared Mr. Bolton.

He hastily kissed his wife good-by and started down without the loss of a moment, as if he feared the Sergeant might change his mind.

The staircase was of that rectangular sort which leaves the last turn at the bottom out of sight from a person standing where Sergeant McCarty was, at the top. Just on the landing, before that last tier of half a dozen steps, was a little cubby-hole of a room opening off, occupied by the butler. As he came to this door, Mr. Bolton passed out of sight under the upper turn of the stairs. McCarty took small notice then, but afterward found every detail of this move standing out in his mind. Dugan was waiting below.

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At the door of the butler's den Mr. Bolton paused and called up, "I'll speak to my butler a moment before I go down!"

"All right!" answered Sergeant McCarty.

The door was heard to open; then there were two voices in conversation for a few moments, after which the door closed and footsteps descended the balance of the way to the hall. McCarty could not see the bottom of the stairs, but he knew that Dugan was waiting.

"Have you got your man?" he called downward.

"I have!" answered Dugan confidently, from beneath.

"Then go ahead!" responded the Sergeant, and turning confidently toward Mrs. Morgan, he asked for the reports of which she had spoken.

FIFTEEN minutes later he was in an inaccessible, eerie-like room in a tower on top of the house, looking helplessly into the muzzle of a revolver! Mrs. Morgan, grim and business-like, held the revolver in both hands and rested her elbows on a little table in front of her. She had taken him here to give him the bundle of reports from the waiter-spy.

While he looked them over eagerly, chuckling as he read, she was gone for a moment, and then, suddenly, she was there again, and McCarty, gloating over what he had found, glanced up unsuspectingly to find himself trapped. The grim eye of the old Comstocker, the woman who once had slain a man in a pistol duel and who had fought her way boldly through those reckless days, gleamed at him over the sights. Before he could move his hand the necessary twelve inches to his own weapon she could put three balls into him. He remembered the fame of her trigger-finger afresh.

"Don't move!" she said quietly, almost in a whisper, but in that awesome voice of hers.

Sergeant McCarty did not move. In fact, he was never at greater pains to keep still in his life.

"'Tis like a woman," he was saying in his Hibernian mind. "She gets her son-in-law in deep and then she tries to get him out. She puts me on and then she tries to put me off. 'Tis like her. 'Twould be like the crazy old fool to shoot and break an arm or a rib of me, too," was his further deduction. Therefore, as a result of continued reflection, he decided to keep stiller than ever.

Mrs. Morgan, too, was keeping still. A tiny clock upon the table ticked loudly enough, boisterously it seemed to the Sergeant, and his own heart beat savagely, but that was all the noise in the room. Presently he broke the spell.

"I want to know how long you're goin' to keep me here," he asked finally.

"Until James Bolton gets away to China!" was the reply.

"To China? What for?"

"Out of this miserable mess about Billie Regent. You know he didn't kill Billie Regent, and I know it, and I'm not going to have my family name nor my daughter's dragged into it, and to keep ours out I've got to keep Jim Bolton's out. So, I'm going to hold you here. It's now eleven o'clock. The *Mongolia* sails for China at one o'clock. From where I sit I can see her come down the bay about ten minutes after one. From this other window, without changing my position, I can see her pass through the Gate off Lime Point. When she passes Lime Point I'll let you go, for it'll be too late then to stop her."

A funny look came into McCarty's eye as she spoke. He chortled mentally.

"But, my dear lady," he exclaimed, "Bolton is now at the police-station, waiting to be examined by me. He won't go on board the *Mongolia*, nor on board nothing else till I get through askin' him some questions, and I might be all night quizzin' him, you know."

Mrs. Morgan laughed—a harsh, nervous crescendo of cachinnations that was even more jarring to the McCarty composure than the unwavering gleam of the revolver, for McCarty was used to revolvers and he never could have got used to a laugh like that.

"That's where we fooled you!" declared Mrs. Morgan, with a gleam of satisfaction in her eyes.

"Fooled me?" asked Sergeant McCarty, thinking over the past hour swiftly, to see wherein he had or might have been deceived.

"Yes, fooled you. James Bolton is not at the city prison, as you think. He did not go there. He went down the stairs and into the butler's room and you thought he came out, but he didn't. The man who came out and down the stairs was the butler, who knows no more about the killing of Billie Regent than you do about how to get out of your present predicament!"

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In McCarty's excitement he half rose from the chair and shook his hand menacingly at the woman, who was smiling sarcastically.

A sharp report rang out! A white-hot streak grazed McCarty's hand. A spasm of pain passed through the member. He fell back in his seat and drew in his hand to look at it. The bullet had grazed his hand so close that the passage of the ball had pained him, but without even breaking the skin. It showed Sergeant McCarty that he was indeed dealing with a desperate, half-crazed woman. And yet, she did not bluster. He had waved his hand. Crack went the pistol! No warning. No threat. Just a bullet.

"Keep still, will you?" she said, as coldly, as undemonstratively as before. "Put your hands back on the arms of the chair where I can see them and don't move them at all."

"But if the butler is in jail waiting for me, where is Mr. Bolton?" presently queried McCarty, forgetting his narrow escape and present critical situation in his anxiety about the prisoner.

"He is down-stairs now, packing for a trip to China. The chauffeur who drove your policeman and the butler to the city jail will be back in a few moments for Mr. Bolton and take him to the Mail dock. The butler understands the part he is to play. You are the only one who knows the real situation, and I tell you that just to make you feel nice and comfortable."

THE chugging of a motor-engine was heard outside.

"What's that?" asked McCarty, whose keen ear, like his eye, was analyzing every possible feature of the situation.

"The chauffeur. He has come back from the police-station. He will now take Mr. Bolton to the Mail dock."

Sergeant McCarty ground his teeth in rage.

The chugging of the engine ceased. The chauffeur was coming in. Presently there was a faint and distant concussion, like the closing of the heavy front door.

"They are going," said Mrs. Morgan quietly.

The chugging began abruptly; after an interval the siren sounded and the pounding engine evaporated into distance.

"They are gone," she further volunteered. "Mr. Bolton is on his way to China!"

Sergeant McCarty twisted his neck restlessly in his collar.

He looked at the little clock. 11:20. The seconds ticked by, endlessly, endlessly, endlessly. After a very long time Sergeant McCarty looked at the clock again. It was 11:40. Only twenty minutes had gone by. In twenty minutes more it would be twelve o'clock. If his release was not accomplished by a little after twelve, he would not be able to do anything effective, as a full hour was none too much time to get 'way down to the Mail dock and make a search and an arrest. But at twelve o'clock their relative positions were unchanged. The Sergeant stirred uneasily in his chair. The gun-barrel glistened again as the hands that held it tightened a little in the alertness of the mind that controlled them.

Sergeant McCarty's florid face was ashed. His blue eyes wore a sickly cast. And then —and then—he had his big idea!

"Begorra," he breathed, in the soul of him, "*I'll hypnotize her!*"

With the utmost confidence, he began by a clumsy attempt at suggestion.

"'Tis very close and drowsy in here, Mrs. Morgan," he observed. "I find myself goin' to sleep wid the very atmosphere of the place."

Sergeant McCarty suffered his eye to droop in demonstration of the fact.

Mrs. Morgan shrugged her shoulders and was silent. For a few moments Sergeant McCarty allowed his head to sink lower and lower.

"I must be gettin' old," he volunteered next. "They say old people has to have a nap in the middle of the day."

Mrs. Morgan was eyeing him curiously, as he could see, but said nothing.

"You are sleepy, too," volunteered the Sergeant, after another interval.

A more emphatic shrugging of the shoulders warned him that the lady disagreed with him.

"Oh, I know you are!" he declared, gazing at her steadily from under his heavy brows, as his own head was inclined forward. He eyed her intently. "Sleepy! Sleepy! Sleepy! You are *so* sleepy!"

He was thinking and sending his thoughts to her on waves of his own imagination. Presently—was it imagination? Was it? Or was there an actual dulling of the gleam that looked at him along the barrel of the revolver?

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"Sleepy! You are so sleepy! Sle-e-e-epy! Sle-e-e-e-epy!" he kept telepathing to her mind.

"S-le-e-e-e-e-epy! S-l-e-e-e-e-e-epy!" his mind was whispering to hers.

Was it possible? Yes, sure! The gleam of her eye was less bright. The upper lid was encroaching on the iris.

But the eyelids rose again and the gleam came back. A hot wave of wrath swept through all McCarty's veins.

"Sleepy! Sleepy! Sleepy!" he telegraphed across, desperately, in quick, insistent, mental dots and dashes. "Sleepy! Sleepy! Sleepy!"

And then, sure enough, the gleam was setting like a sun. The lid was drooping.

"S-l-le-e-e-e-e-e-p-y! S-l-e-e-e-e-e-epy!" S-l-e-e-e-e-epy!" he was whispering, coaxingly, soothingly, drowsily, all in his mind, a mere telepathy.

The eyelid drooped across the iris, across the very pupil; lower; the eye was half obscured; the head, too, was drooping.

Then she nodded and waked herself with a gasp of surprise.

McCarty's blue eyes closed. His head was drowsed forward on his shoulders. His eyes opened a merest squint and peered through his shaggy brows, cautiously. The old lady was looking all around, as if surprised. She resumed her pose of rigidity.

Sergeant McCarty's mind began to sing again its soft, dusky, whip-poor-will song; intently, unceasingly, minute by minute, for five full minutes.

Again her drooping eyelids lurched downward till, for an instant, they met and quivered on the lower ones. A moment later he was standing over her and had wrested the weapon from her hand.

"UGH! You ugly brute!" she muttered hoarsely, and then sat looking at him defiantly.

She was disarmed. McCarty disregarded her entirely. Instead, he glanced at the clock. 12:30. The boat would sail in half an hour and he could barely reach its side, perhaps could not do so. Dugan was at the station, half-way there. It would be quicker to send Dugan.

He dashed headlong down-stairs to the telephone and called the central office.

"Hey! Is Dugan there?"

"Him answering," came the reply.

"Did ye get there with your man?"

"Yes; he's sitting here beside me now in the office, waiting for you to come."

"Well, kick him out, and quick, the stool-pigeon!" ordered McCarty in his wrath. "That ain't Bolton at all. He fooled ye. That's the butler. They shuffled the cards on us goin' down the stairs. Bolton went down and into the butler's room, and the butler come on out and went down to you."

Dugan gasped his amazement with a short, torrid remark.

"Now," ordered McCarty, "we're stung once. There's time yet, though, for you to get in the police car, go like blazes to the Mail dock, find Bolton and pry him off the ship and take him to headquarters quick. And be sure you kick that butler now, out into the street; begin at the office door and kick him all the way out to Larkin Street."

"I'll do that, all right!" declared Dugan. "I'm limberin' up my foot—I'm kickin' him now. But say! How'll I know Bolton when I see him? They rung a cold deck on me once. The petticoats give me the butler at the house, they might hand me the cook, or the figurehead, or something off the ship!"

"W-e-l-l," hesitated McCarty. "Oh, say, take the butler along to pick out the boss. Quick, now, Dugan, quick!"

With a sigh of satisfaction McCarty hung up the 'phone and stood in the spacious hall, wiping from his florid face the perspiration that oozed from every pore. The strain seemed finally ended.

"Glory be!" he murmured with magnificent complacency. "'Tis well that old McCarty kapes himself abreast of all these modern invintions, like hypnotism, hygiene and all them other newfangled notions. 'Twas me hypnotism that saved me this time. My, but it worked beautiful! Be-e-eautiful! But for me nimble Irish wit and the noble art of hypnotism, now, I should be sitting yonder in that old room yet, feeling the goose-flesh rise at the back of my neck."

While he made these remarks to himself, he continued wiping away the perspiration. As he finished the operation and bestowed the great silk handkerchief, which he affected, in the inside pocket of his blouse, his eyes were raised naturally to the stairs, and there, on the top of the last turn, just a step below the little landing on which was the butler's den, stood Jim Morgan's widow. She was motionless, observing him.

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"Clever old cat!" he said to himself, and then suddenly turned his eyes back over her face again, searchingly. There was something about the look of her that unsteadied him a little. A sort of half smile of triumph was playing on her features.

But his thoughts turned swiftly away to Dugan. How was he getting along, anyway? Would he get Bolton, all right, or would he not? To be sure he would, McCarty insisted to himself, and swung onto his car, computing that about one minute after he entered his office Dugan would also enter, bringing Bolton with him, while at the same time the *Mongolia* would be visible from Mrs. Morgan's eerie, making her way slowly out toward the Golden Gate.

His computations proved correct, for he had hardly settled into the big armchair before his desk when he heard Dugan's voice without, chuckling over the success of his venture.

"Did you get him?" McCarty roared, impatiently, out into the anteroom.

"I did, sir," answered Dugan proudly, appearing at the door with a man beside him.

"Aha!" said McCarty, recognizing the man; "I see you brought back the butler too. Bring in Bolton and we'll go through him first."

"This is Mr. Bolton," said Dugan, looking a trifle confused but laying his hand on the shoulder of the man beside him.

"Bolton, nothing!" thundered McCarty. "That's the butler! Where's Bolton? The man with the gray sack suit, brown telescope hat, light mustache, blue eyes and smallish pug nose? Where's he?"

McCarty stood as he put his question, and leaned forward in his eagerness, his hands trembling as they touched the desk, for he began to suspect something was wrong.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Dugan. "That was the man I turned loose!"

"Turned loose!" gasped McCarty. "Where is he?"

"Why, I did not seem to notice where he went. Mr. Bolton, here—this man—when I took him off the ship, he sent the gray-suited man back to get his traps and bring them off from his stateroom."

"But the gray-suited man was Bolton—this is the butler—I sent you over there to get the gray-suited man."

"No!" affirmed Dugan stoutly. "The gray-suited man was the one I brought down-town with me. I thought he was Bolton. He didn't deny it."

"And so he was!" declared McCarty in amazement.

"WELL," continued Dugan, "I brought him here to the station with me. He didn't say he was not Bolton, but when you called me up and told me he was the butler, he was sitting right here. The 'phone wasn't working right and I guess he heard what you said. Anyhow, he smiled a little like he'd been fooling us, and then was kind of still and thoughtful, a little like he was afraid. You told me to take him along to point Mr. Bolton out to me. And we went and there at the foot of the gangplank was this man waiting. He saw us coming and his face got red-like, and he swore and was mad, or else he pretended to be. Anyhow, he said '—— the luck!' and told the gray-suited man to go quick and gather up his luggage and get it off. We didn't want the butler and I didn't even wait to see if he got off."

Sergeant McCarty stood leaning forward, his eyes popping out of his head and his mouth wide open.

"Then I can tell you, Dugan," said McCarty, in tones that were hot with deep disgust; "he didn't leave the ship. That man in the gray suit was James Bolton. We had him in custody and we nearly made him miss his boat, and then we kindly took him over to the dock in the police car and put him on board just in time to make it!"

Sergeant McCarty was sick with shame and humiliation. He collapsed into his chair.

"But," said Dugan, "I don't see how they done it! I had the right man then and you told me to turn him loose."

"Yes," said McCarty, "the old cat lied to us. She put me on Queer Street and kept me there. She told me they shuffled the men; then she got me in a pigeon-cote with a gun on me and was goin' to hold me till the ship sailed with Bolton on it, while you held the butler here thinking he was Bolton. But I was too many for her. I hypnotized her and broke the drop and started to unwind things; but gee, I wound 'em up, I guess! She must have held me till she had her scheme planted and then turned me loose, makin' me think I'd beat her. But say, I want your story now!"

The Sergeant directed a savage eye at the butler.

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"What do you know about this?" he asked.

The butler was looking scared at his part in the transaction and eager enough to talk.

"Why, sir," he said, "a few minutes after Mr. Bolton went out with the officer, there, Mrs. Morgan came to me in a great hurry and give me the money to engage a passage to China on the *Mongolia*, for Mr. Bolton. She told me he was in jail, but she'd make you think you'd got me instead of Mr. Bolton, and at the last minute you'd bring Mr. Bolton over to the steamship to pick me out and I was to pretend to be him and let myself be arrested and he was to pretend to be me and go after my bags, but instead he would stay on the ship and sail with it. I only did what I was told, sir. The officer did not ask me if I was Mr. Bolton, or anything. He just grabbed me when Mr. Bolton ran up to me, and threw me in the car—roughly, sir—and brought me here. I hope I'm not in no trouble, sir."

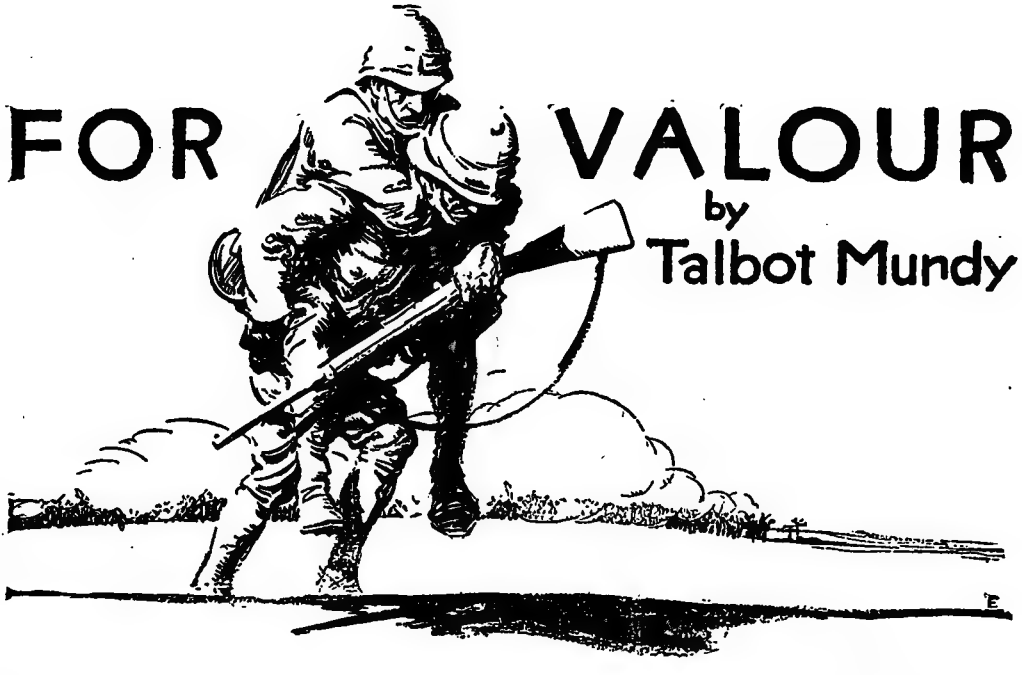
He looked anxiously from the face of the Sergeant to that of Dugan and back again. Sergeant McCarty's cap was pulled low over his eyes. His shoulders were slouched forward, his elbows on his knees and his eyes upon the floor, and he twiddled his thumbs, dejectedly.

"The petticoats done us!" said Dugan sympathetically.

"Naw!" snorted McCarty, out of the somber clouds that lay upon his soul. "Naw! 'Twas the hypnotism."

"The hypnotism!" exclaimed Dugan in surprise, for he had forgotten. "Did ye work ut?"

"Yes," said McCarty, out of the depths, "I worked it—on meself!"



FOR VALOUR

by

Talbot Mundy

THERE was a woman at the bottom of it, but there always is; Mother Eve set the fashion for that donkey's years ago. It was the woman who pulled the string that saved the reputation of the Hundred and Ninety and Ninth and though she never got the credit for it, she got more than she deserved in the way of reward; and that is also the way of women.

The Hundred and Ninety-Ninth are known unofficially as the True and Tried. They never brag about their record, for they have no need to; the pages of history and the names of battles emblazoned on their colors are standing evidence that they

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have earned their name. If one solitary soldier of the True and Tried should ever happen to be caught flinching in the hour of peril, the whole regiment would hang its collective head in shame and misery; so, as the woman saved them from it, she must be let down lightly whatever happens.

Her name was Rosie Webster and she was far—and—away the prettiest girl in the whole depot. She was a well-built, bonny-looking wench with saucy, laughing lips and a roguish way with her; she was the living, laughing picture of rude health and just the right type of woman to make a soldier's wife. There was not a soldier in the whole depot, from the rank of sergeant-major downward, who would not have married her if he had only had the chance. But she loved "Rat" Brunton and turned down all others one by one. And "Rat" Brunton vowed that he loved her.

He got his nickname of "Rat" from a habit he had of twiggling his long, thin, black mustache whenever he drank; and that was whenever anybody else was good-natured enough to pay for it. But the name fitted him in other ways. He was secretive and cunning; he never quarreled openly, but he bore malice patiently and persistently and anybody who happened to offend him usually regretted it sooner or later.

He never walked around with his man to the regimental fives-court and stood up to him under the Queensberry rules until one or the other of them had had enough of it, and so he never got "C. B."* until his face was presentable again. In fact he never came up for punishment of any kind. And he never laughed lustily as the average run of soldiers do. He had a nasty, mean, supercilious grin, that showed his eye-teeth, and he grinned at things that made most other men swear blasphemously; merely amusing incidents left him unaffected.

He was a handsome fellow, though, big enough and broad enough and straight enough in the back; he knew his drill and kept himself and his accouterment clean; but nobody in the regiment liked him. That is to say, nobody except the chaplain; the chaplain spoke of him as a model soldier. Butler, the captain of his company, was always trying to get him transferred to some other company, though he could never give any adequate reason for it.

"Why?" asked the Colonel irritably, when Butler was more than usually insistent.

"He doesn't get on with the men, sir," answered Butler.

"That lawyer wouldn't get on with the men of any other company either; you'll have to make the best of him!"

"——!" muttered Butler under his breath. "I'd have the best company in the line if I could only get rid of that brute!"

The runner-up in Rosie Webster's favor was Bill Swanwick—Big Bill Swanwick, who played full-back in the Regimental football team. It was he who saved the day when the all-conquering gunners came down from Woolwich with the advertised intention of wiping the True and Tried team off the map; the gunners never once got past Bill Swanwick; the game ended in a draw, and from that day Big Bill was the hero of the regiment.

He was another type of man altogether. Everybody liked Swanwick, from the Colonel downward. Besides being the biggest man in the regiment, he was the best drilled and the best tempered and it was only a little matter of neglected education that stood in the way of his promotion. With his regimental record and his popularity, he should have been a sergeant long ago.

But the regimental schoolmaster labored over him in vain. The officer whose duty it was to be present at the half-yearly examination hid his face ostentatiously behind a newspaper while another man tried vainly to chouse Swanwick through the intricacies of a problem in arithmetic; and the schoolmaster wrote the answer absentmindedly on the blackboard and then wiped it off again.

But Big Bill simply could not tackle book-learning and that was all there was to it. The schoolmaster damned him, and all but wept over him, and set him questions that a child could have answered, and the Colonel spoke to him and tried to encourage him with well-meant chaff and excused him from parade so that he might attend school oftener. But Big Bill grinned and scratched his head and stared at his well-thumbed text-books and remained a private.

*Confined to barracks.

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IF ANYTHING could have induced him to learn arithmetic it would have been his love for Rosie Webster. The fact that she loved Brunton did not discourage him overmuch, for, being in the same company, he knew all about Brunton and, although he would have shot himself sooner than have squealed on a comrade, he was quite convinced somewhere at the back of his slow-moving brain that some day Rosie would find Rat out on her own account and then it would be his own turn to make the running.

Had he had it in him, he would have learned Greek to please Rosie, but he could no more have explained the Rule of Three than he could have explained his love for her. His love was an accepted fact, just as the Rule of Three was an elusive and damnable theory.

Rosie had made up her mind long ago, but she dallied with Swanwick disgracefully; he was a fine big man for one thing and better looking even than Rat Brunton. She liked to be seen about with him. But when he brought himself to the point of a proposal she was adamant.

"No!" she told him. "You're a fine big man, Bill, and you're dead honest, but you're a fool. You'll never be anything more than a private. Henry Brunton's three years younger than you are and he hasn't been in the army so long as you by nearly four years, but he'll be a general, like as not, some day and give you orders!"

Her idea was not quite so extravagant as perhaps it sounded, for no less than ten per cent. of the officers of the British army have risen from the ranks and there are generals among the ten per cent. But the fact remained that Rat Brunton had not yet started on the upward path and if he wanted to become even a lieutenant he would have to hurry up. A man has to be something more than well-drilled and clean to win promotion; and although without it promotion is impossible nowadays, education will not serve instead of character.

Officers make a point of knowing everything there is to know about every man in the regiment and the non-commissioned officers are very carefully picked. Men who fail to inspire confidence in either their comrades or their superiors stand no chance whatever of rising from the ranks.

So Rat Brunton was still a private when the True and Tried were ordered out to Egypt to help smash the Mahdi. The Mahdi needed smashing as badly as anybody ever did since the beginning of the world and he was as nasty a proposition as could be imagined.

His men had whipped the British in a stand-up fight more than once and he made no secret whatever of his intentions to drive the British into the sea and capture the whole of Egypt; so some picked regiments were ordered out to deal with him. The True and Tried were first on the list, but they took that as a matter of course; first place was theirs by right of record.

Saying good-by to his girl on those occasions is one of the sentimental treats that Tommy Atkins enjoys with every cell in his being and in that respect Rat Brunton was no exception to the general rule. His farewell to Rosie Webster was a masterpiece of its kind. "You'll come back a full-blown sergeant!" she whispered when he finished playing lingeringly on the last pathetic chord and kissed her for the last time. "You bet I will!" he answered boastfully. Whatever his private opinion of himself might be, he had a very good one to air in public and he never hesitated to give it expression.

Then Bill Swanwick came around to wring his withers; for it is almost a religion to say good-by to somebody, and to rend the heart-strings of your own girl is only one degree more fascinating than to take sad and solemn leave of the woman who will have none of you; or so at least thinks Thomas Atkins, and he is past-master-connoisseur of sentiment.

He came and sat beside her in her mother's parlor and said nothing for twenty throbbing minutes — twenty minutes of sweet misery that he would not have missed for a kingdom.

"Still sweet on Brunton?" he asked her at the end of it.

"Yes," she answered. "I'm going to marry him when he comes back. I like you, Bill—everybody likes you. But I'd never marry you. I suppose I'm too ambitious. What do you want to marry me for?"

"Love you," answered Swanwick, who was a monosyllabic sort of man.

"Do you really?"

Swanwick nodded.

"I've an idea you're selfish; all men are."

Swanwick said nothing. He never boasted

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about himself and he was not nearly fool enough to argue with a woman.

"Are you selfish?"

"Ask my mates."

"There isn't time to ask them. I want you to do something really unselfish—I'll have to take you on trust—I'm not afraid to—only—I don't know if you'll do it. Will you promise me something, Bill—something really big?"

"Go ahead," said Swanwick.

"That won't do—you must promise!"

"I promise."

"Now I know you won't break that! I'll kiss you good-by if you'll promise again when I've told you what it is. I want you to look after Henry Brunton for me! Will you?"

Swanwick winced. But he had promised. Also he loved the girl—with the great unselfish love of which men such as he are capable. It passed his understanding why she would want a man like Rat Brunton, but it was plain that she did and if he could give her what she wanted, why not?

"I'll do what I can," he answered quietly.

"Bill, you're a dear! She flung her arms around his neck and kissed him according to promise, and he kissed her back, full on the ripe red lips that belonged to Brunton.

"You'll bring him back alive?" she asked blushing.

"I'll try to," he answered. Then he walked out of the house stiffly, with his chin up, and enough anguish raging in his bosom to satisfy a whole regiment. He refused a comrade's offer of beer in the canteen for fear of washing away the memory of the kiss.

II

OUT in Egypt the campaign proceeded like a game of chess. The general commanding the British army is as widely known to-day as any man in Europe, but in those days he was building his reputation and doing it with the care and machine-like precision for which he has become famous.

Not a man in the army got a drop of alcoholic drink from the time the campaign started, with the result that every marching record was broken and the Mahdi's followers were brought to bay at the Atbara months before any one expected it. In fact, the regiments had moved forward almost too quickly. There were provisions and ammunition at the front in plenty, but the thousand-mile line of communication had grown rather stretched and thin. There were constant relays of fresh regiments on the march, but most of them had still a long way to go before they could be of any use against the Mahdi.

The dervishes had chosen their own fighting ground and had chosen it well. They had fenced themselves behind a *zareba* and had dug a huge trench in front of it. A *zareba* is nothing but a fence, but there are varieties of fences and theirs was of the hair-raising description.

It was made of wooden and iron spikes, man-high, sunk well into the ground and reinforced at close intervals with ugly-looking spears and every other species of inhospitality that dervish ingenuity could contrive. It was impenetrable and quite unclimbable and behind it was a swarm of half naked warriors who outnumbered the opposing British forces by seven or eight to one.

The dervishes were well armed with fairly modern breech-loading rifles and they had some artillery, captured from the British in a former campaign; about twenty-five per cent. of them had made up their minds to die where they stood, for to die fighting the pork-fed *feringhee* is the dervish's surest passport into Paradise, and, taken by and large, they were as ugly and uncomfortable a proposition as any British army ever had to tackle.

It might not have been so bad if the *zareba* had been the only problem, but on the other side of the river was a host of so-called "friendlies," who also considerably outnumbered the British army. These gentlemen had not yet quite made up their minds which side to take; they preferred to await the outcome of the first big battle before committing themselves.

So they had taken up a position where they could overlook the fight and where, in the event of the British getting the worst of it, as seemed not at all improbable, they would be beautifully placed to loot the British camp, which contained innumerable things besides ammunition that their unsophisticated souls longed for.

Every minute of delay meant one more minute in which the friendlies might decide

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to become unfriendly; every night that passed exposed the British army to the danger of the dreaded night attack. A hundred thousand or more coal-black fighting men, most of them looking for a glorious death and all of them quite ignorant of fear, are an awkward enough problem in the day-time, but at night when the darkness makes them almost invisible they are likely to upset the equanimity of even Tommy Atkins. Beyond any doubt whatever, prompt action of sorts was the key to the situation.

So the guns got busy; they usually play the overture to every scrap. But the guns were not very effective on this occasion. The dervishes, building more wisely than they knew, had constructed their *zareba* out on the desert sand, and the shrapnel, which works so beautifully on rocky ground, behaved disappointingly. The neat round balls of iron that are supposed to scatter and search out the enemy, ricochetting off everything they hit, buried themselves instead.

They made an unpleasant noise, but did no damage to speak of. They did not even scare the dervishes, who yelled defiance at every round, volleying back at long range with their rifles and daring the British to come on. And the friendlies on the other side of the river drew nearer—nearer to the British camp.

So the Sirdar, which is the title of the general commanding the army in Egypt, did the one thing possible. He did not put it in so many actual words, for a V. C. is not a thing to be treated lightly or bargained for, like a million dollars or a coronet or a kingdom; but he allowed it to be understood that there was a V. C. waiting for the first man over the *zareba;* and he gave that information about twenty minutes to sink in, while the guns continued pounding the desert sand and a few necessary maneuvers were going through to get the troops in line. Then he gave the order to advance; and the sequel is history.

THE V. C. is not a picnic medal. The full name of it is the Victoria Cross and its full intrinsic value is five cents. The bronze of which it is made is obtained from Russian cannon that were captured at Balaklava and other places and on it in plain Roman letters are the two words "FOR VALOUR." Its owner's name is engraved on the rim, and above, on the bar from which it is suspended, is the date of the heroic action that justified its being hung round its owner's neck by the reigning sovereign.

Most V. C.'s are won by soldiers in the ranks. To win it a man must be actually seen by his superior officer in the act of performing a really heroic deed in the presence of the enemy, and an officer's chance of winning it is thus rather less than a private's for the higher in rank he happens to be, the fewer superiors he has who can recommend him for it.

It is the most coveted distinction in the world. The man who has it takes precedence over all other commoners and is entitled to a general officer's salute. A field-marshal who has not got the Victoria Cross will salute a private of the line who has; the king will raise his hat to him and the man in the street, the man whose opinion in the end settles the fate of the empires and is the one sure gage to judge by, will show him the deepest respect where the wearer of a coronet would be openly scoffed at.

Unlike all other European distinctions, no king or prince can wear it, for he never gets the opportunity to earn it; it never goes by favor; it has to be won at the risk of almost certain death, and the more self-sacrificing a man is, the better chance he has of winning it.

So the V. C. has become something higher than a fetish among the rank and file of the British army and the hope of winning it will drag them where not even the richest loot would persuade them to go. It will send them roaring gleefully to certain death where neither regimental traditions nor officers could drive them; it will send a man out alone under fire to rescue a wounded comrade, and will keep the last left bombardier standing by his gun, spiking it to make it useless to the enemy.

Nobody won the V. C. on this occasion, because nobody knew who was over the *zareba* first. The moment the red-faced buglers strained their lungs over the first clear ringing notes of the "Charge," a roar went up that shook the desert and the massed brigades of infantry rushed into the zone of fire, racing neck and neck for the *zareba,* while the gunners kept the air overhead shrieking with round after round of shell and cursed their luck that kept them out of the mêlée.

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The whole army swept over the trench and barrier as a wave sweeps over a half-sunk rock. The front rank must have checked at it, for the only way was over it and the thing was unclimbable; but the check was too brief for the eyes to follow. The rear ranks leaped on the shoulders of the men in front of them and jumped down into the inferno that was waiting for them, while the front rank men tore at the stakes of the *zareba*, rooting them up and breaking them and fighting their way through to join their luckier comrades who were at it with the bayonet and the butt inside.

Tommy's chief ambition is to blood his bayonet in the body of an enemy and he got his fill on that occasion. In ten minutes there was no *zareba* and in less than an hour there was no dervish army—nothing but a stricken field with the British flag lolling lazily in the middle of it and the little groups of stretcher-bearers moving here and there, gathering up the dead and wounded.

Out at the far end of what had been the *zareba* Tommy Atkins was lying prone on his stomach directing long-range volleys at the enemy, who were scooting like blown sand across the desert.

Swanwick and Brunton were together at the battle of the Atbara. It was the butt of Swanwick's rifle that struck Brunton behind and brought him to his senses when half the distance to the *zareba* was yet to go and the dervish volleys were ripping through the British ranks and Brunton funked it. It was the same rifle-butt that cracked the skull of a dervish two minutes later when Brunton was down whimpering and a spear-blade flickered just above him; and it was the toe of Swanwick's boot that kicked the uninjured Brunton up again, and Swanwick who pushed him forward into the scrimmage, growling in his ear, "Fight,——ye! Fight, you——dirty hound! Get in and fight!"

If Swanwick had been thinking only of the regiment's honor, he would probably have killed Brunton with his own bayonet, and the Colonel, had he ever known about it, would doubtless have thanked him for it afterward. But he was thinking of the girl, too, and of his promise to the girl. So he kicked Brunton along in front of him, wondering in his thick-headed way what the girl could possibly see to like in such a coward, but guarding him while the battle lasted with all the skill and courage that was in him.

Swanwick collapsed when the engagement was over, for a big man always goes down more quickly from the sun than a man who is more lightly built, and he had lost his helmet when they crossed the *zareba*. He was hurt in three places and Brunton left him lying where he was for the stretcher-bearers to pick up when they chose to.

His own water bottle was empty and his thirst needed attending to, and besides there was a chance that Big Bill might die from the loss of blood, which would be an excellent settlement of the score; for Swanwick had kicked him, and men such as Brunton take unkindly to being kicked.

But the stretcher-bearers found Big Bill Swanwick in good time and bore him off to safety. The clean desert air soon healed his wounds, and ten days under the double canvas of the hospital tents undid the damage that the sun had wrought. Within three weeks he was back at the front again, marching forty-mile-a-day stages with the regiment and holding his tongue as usual.

In the heat of the desperate engagement at the *zareba* nobody had had time to notice the behavior of Rat Brunton—nobody, that is to say, except Swanwick; all the rest of them had been too busy fighting for their own skins and seeing to it that no other regiment of the line was so much as an inch in front of them, for it is a sacred tradition of the True and Tried that they have always formed the thin end of the wedge in battle, and they live up to it.

Brunton soon smelled out his luck and before long was actually boasting of his prowess and, though nobody believed him, there was nobody to give him the lie.

THEN Swanwick rejoined the column and the long march on Khartoum commenced. Brunton held his tongue for a day or two. But Swanwick said nothing, and the Rat put his silence down to loss of memory due to sunstroke. He had heard of things like that happening and he could think of no other possible reason why Swanwick should not bawl him out before the whole regiment.

He knew that Big Bill was too big a fool to use his knowledge for his own private advantage and his evil brain refused to

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recognize even the possibilities of higher motives. In the end he put it down to just luck and resumed his boasting. Soon his boasting became intolerable.

He was marching side by side with Swanwick when the climax came, boasting even more windily than usual. He had really owed his immunity thus far to the magnificent good temper of the men, who were in a mood to put up with almost anything. The Mahdi had conceived the amazing notion of frightening the troops before they could get anywhere near Khartoum, where he was entrenching himself preparatory to putting up a last stupendous fight, and with that end in view he kept sending out detachments of desperate warriors mounted on camels to raid the advancing columns and worry them at unexpected intervals.

It passed his comprehension that Tommy Atkins could be simply dancing for a scrap; he had no means of acquiring information on that point. He did not know that when the British soldiers were not backing B Company's tarantula for good money against D Company's five-inch scorpion for a stand-up fight to a finish on a stolen tent-fly they were discussing nothing whatever but the chances of another battle.

But Tommy Atkins had won the first fight and seen his dead. He had seen, too, what the enemy did to a prisoner or a wounded man who fell into their hands and he had not the slightest sympathy for the Mahdi's followers; he was simply aching for another go at them. All he dreaded was the prospect of a long march across the desert with nothing doing at the other end of it; so the Mahdi's tactics of constantly harassing him had exactly the opposite effect to what was intended. Officers and men were as happy as a Sunday-school outing and quarreling among the rank and file was almost unknown.

But even when men are good-tempered, there is a limit to what they will endure and the men of B Company, sweating along under the glaring, white sand, were almost ready to turn on Brunton and rend him like a pack of wolves.

B Company was nominally scouting; actually the men were marching in column of fours, five miles ahead and on the right flank of the main column, the remainder of the True and Tried being at the head of it. They were sweating and swearing and grunting and praying devoutly that some wandering column of dervishes might find them, for over the blinding, glittering sand they could see nothing.

Suddenly Swanwick half turned and seized Brunton by the elbow. "You're a brave man, aren't you!" he growled. "Stow it, or I'll——" He left the threat unfinished, but Brunton stopped as though he had been shot and the whole company laughed at him. And Rat Brunton took more kindly even to being kicked than to being laughed at. So he swore vengeance to himself, knowing well how to wait for it, but quietly determined not to let the first opportunity slip by.

Presently the men's mocking laughter died down to expectant silence and there was no sound but the measured scrunch of dry sand and the heavy breathing; for a marauding band of dervishes had shown up on the skyline.

III

THERE was a sand-hill here and a sand-hill there and a sand-hill over in the distance, with miles and miles of dazzling sand in between, wind-blown into rippling ridge and furrow—sand that a man could only blink at. The men's eyes ached from gazing over it and nobody could even guess how many dervishes there were. Only the chance of a scrap seemed imminent and the click of tightening belts and the click of Lee-Metford breech-bolts, as each man furtively tested his weapon, answered for the temper of the men. The sand-hill on the sky-line was long and low, like a bank on the sea-shore, and the dervishes seemed to pour in an endless stream from behind it.

"Compan—ee! Front form! Form single rank! To three paces—open order—extend!" The men spread out like the sticks of a fan across the desert, while Captain Butler kept his smoked field-glasses focussed steadily on the enemy. "Looks like a scrap to me, Joyce!" he said, addressing one of his subalterns.

"A real good scrap too!" answered Joyce. "Think they'll stand?"

"Can't ever tell. But it looks like a raid to me — a real desperate, business-like raid! Gad! I hope it is! Look at 'em, by Jove; they really are coming! You'd better get that helio going—signal

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the column, 'Enemy attacking in force—estimate three thousand—reinforce at once—hurry.' Pity we haven't got a Maxim here; it might be useful."

Joyce ran to the helio; Butler turned to his men. "Lie down all!" he ordered.

"Volley firing at eight hundred—Ready! Present! Fire!"

A perfectly timed volley kicked up the sand in little spurts at the varying distances in front. The men's eyes were dazzled by the sand, but the oncoming dervishes mistook the rotten shooting for evidence of blue funk, and howled with glee. "Try independent firing—marksmen only!" ordered Butler. "Cease fire the rest!" But the marksmen of B Company, who were perfect shots on the grass-covered range at home, did little better with the glare of the desert sand in their eyes than their comrades had done. One of the enemy pitched forward off his camel, but only one; the rest collected into something resembling a fighting formation and drew nearer with a rush.

"Now we've got 'em!" exclaimed Butler. "Volley firing—at five hundred—Ready!" The bullets kicked up the dust again, but nearer to the enemy. The second volley brought down a good dozen of them, and the third volley ripped through their middle and thinned their ranks by fifty or more.

But it takes more than a volley or two to stop a rush of "the faithful" when the Mahdi's banner has been unfurled. They came on faster than ever, yelling more fiercely then ever, more than ever determined to charge home.

Butler glanced behind him. It was his duty to check this rush if possible and hold the dervishes until he could be reinforced from the rear; to do that he must retreat slowly; it was evident that if he remained where he was there would be nothing else for it but fighting in hollow square, for the dervishes would circle right round him and attack from four sides at once. The enemy were firing as they ran now and aiming uncommonly straight.

"By sections—in echelon—retire!" ordered Butler.

Section by section, neatly, and without the least appearance of hurry the men retired, each alternate section kneeling down to fire volleys while the remainder withdrew. When the latter had fallen back fifty yards or so, they halted, turned about and volleyed in turn, while the advanced sections passed through the gaps between them and repeated the performance.

It was wonderfully neat work and Butler was proud of it; for while almost any man can lead well-trained men to the attack, it takes a man with a cool head to keep them steady in retreat.

"Independent firing!" he ordered, as the enemy rushed closer. "Aim low! Take your time! Don't waste ammunition!" Several men were wounded by now, but each half-section was caring for its own, carrying them to the rear with them as they passed through the gaps in the echelon movement. Nobody missed Rat Brunton.

The helio had done its work long ago and eight more companies of the True and Tried were racing over the desert to the rescue. Half of them halted and sent a volley into the dervishes at long range. It did little damage, but it called the enemy's attention to the fact that things would get too hot for them in a few minutes. With all their bravery, the dervishes can be uncommonly discreet; they stopped rushing and stood their ground, answering volley with ragged volley, quite confident of their ability to get away when the time came and determined to do all the damage they could before reinforcements got too close. Nobody missed Big Bill Swanwick.

But Bill Swanwick had missed Rat Brunton and had gone to look for him. Shading his eyes with his hands, he had seen what he took for a khaki uniform stretched flat in one of the sand furrows betweeen him and the enemy and he was crawling forward as stealthily as he could, working his way over to the left so as to be able to crawl down the furrow out of sight of the enemy and reach his quarry unobserved. Three of the enemy had seen that khaki uniform too and were crawling along the next furrow from the opposite direction, but Swanwick could not see them. Neither could Rat Brunton, who was crouching quite unharmed but paralyzed with fright and trying to sham death.

SWANWICK moved the faster, for being on the left flank he was out of the direct line of fire of both sides. The three dervishes were in greater danger from the rifles of their own men than from those of the British, for most of their own

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side fired wildly and the bullets plowed up the ground in between like hail.

They had to creep down the furrow carefully and hug the ground; but a Lee-Metford rifle and a bandoleer full of cartridges is worth an awful lot of risk and a knife in the back of a British soldier means Paradise for the wielder of the knife. So they crept forward.

Swanwick was dragging his rifle along in his right hand, regardless of the risk of getting the breech-bolt clogged with sand, and thinking only of how to reach the prostrate Brunton.

As he crawled up to him, a black, woolly head appeared suddenly over the ridge beside him and Swanwick swung his rifle one-handed and smashed it with the butt-end. He arose to his knees to recover from the blow and as he did so a second dervish sprang to his feet and leaped forward. Swanwick thrust his bayonet upward into the man's stomach, gave it a twist, and drew it out again; then he lay down beside Brunton to be out of reach of bullets.

"What's up, Rat?" he asked. "Are you hit?"

Brunton said nothing and Swanwick pinched him — not over-gently — hard enough, in fact, to fetch a squeal from a man who had any life left in him.

"Curse you!" swore Brunton. "What did you do that for? Let me be!"

"Ho!" said Swanwick, "so that's the game is it! Scrimming again, eh! Are you hurt anywhere?"

"You let me alone, you great lump!" answered Brunton. "Get out and let me be, or I'll——"

But Swanwick's slow-moving temper rose at last. He rose to his full height and kicked Brunton in the ribs with all his might. "Get up, you swine! Get up and be shot like a man! Get up, or I'll stick you like a pig myself!"

The third dervish had been lying low. He leaped up now and caught Swanwick unawares; before Big Bill had time to swing his rifle, the black man's knife was into him, ripping his thigh open. Then came a crash as the full weight of the Lee-Metford descended on the Arab's neck and broke it and Big Bill fell forward on the top of Brunton.

"Now, carry me out of this!" ordered Swanwick, biting back the groan of agony that half-escaped him. "Get up, you swine, and lift me!"

Brunton rolled him over and rose to his knees. A volley screeched over him and several bullets spattered in the sand around him, coming from both directions. He lay down again promptly.

"D'ye hear me?" demanded Swanwick. "Up ye get and take me out of this. There's maybe a hundred o' them niggers seen ye; they'll be here with their knives in half a minute."

Brunton's dumb paralysis of fear gave place to panic and he got up to run for it; but Swanwick grabbed him by the ankle and pulled him back.

"No, ye don't, —— you! You'll take me with you!"

He reached up and seized Brunton's arm and dragged himself to his feet. Then suddenly he sprang, threw his whole weight on the broad of Brunton's back and held on, with his right arm round the Rat's neck; his left hand still clutched his rifle.

"Now run, —— ye! It's your only chance!"

The eight supporting companies of the True and Tried had raced like hares across the desert. Not one of them had so much as smelled a canteen for more than six months and they had marched themselves fit; so they covered the intervening five miles in an amazingly short time, with the Colonel riding his charger at the head of them.

The Colonel saw it; two majors saw it and four Captains. Rat Brunton, staggering under the weight, carried in Big Bill Swanwick through a veritable hail of fire, and he had nearly reached his own company when a bullet from the enemy struck him behind the knee and dropped him. It was as clear a case of self-sacrificing valour as any one could wish to see.

The dervishes retired sullenly and disappeared behind the sand-hill again when the fire of the whole regiment was concentrated on them, and then the field-stretchers were heliographed for and the stretcher-bearers were set to cleaning up the mess.

Swanwick was unconscious; Brunton was in agony and much too scared to speak; the Colonel did the talking. "I suppose you don't want to get that man transferred now, eh, Butler?" he asked, grinning. "Another V. C. in the regiment—that makes two in my time. How about putting him in some other company, eh?"

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"I take back what I said, sir! He saved the life of a really useful man, too—I'm glad he stayed in B Company."

"Um-m-m! Well, I suppose you've a prior right to him; but any of the others would be glad to have him, you know. Don't be diffident about it!"

"I'll keep him, thank you, sir!"

The men could talk of nothing else. It is very seldom that a man who boasts as Brunton had done proves to be anything but a rank coward, and yet nobody could accuse the Rat of cowardice after what they had seen that day. He was not a bit more popular, for the memory of his meanness was far too keen, but they accorded him unqualified respect for his supposed bravery and they were unqualifiedly grateful to him for rescuing Big Bill Swanwick.

IV

SWANWICK and Brunton were carried to the field-hospital to be patched up and then were hurried to the base, for their wounds were what are described in the official returns as "serious." Neither of them was fit for further work in that campaign and the first home-going troopship bore them to Netley; and in Netley hospital they laid them side by side in neighboring cots.

All the way from the field-hospital to the base—and all the way from the base to Netley, Swanwick never spoke one word to Brunton, though the journey lasted seven full weeks. Then, as they were both allowed out of bed for the first time, Swanwick sat down facing Brunton, and before he had said a word of any kind the Rat knew what was coming. For Swanwick's expression was firm and hard; his slowly moving, unequivocating brain had been working on the problem since the problem arose. He had finished now; his mind was made up. And Brunton saw it—and trembled.

"What are you going to do about it?" demanded Swanwick.

"Me? Why, I've been recommended for the V. C. I'm going to get it." The Rat tried to hide his embarrassment under an air of superiority that was a weird misfit.

"Maybe you are. There's the regiment to think about. The Hundred and Ninety-Ninth can't have a man recommended for it and then found out. Everybody'd laugh. You're going to get it. But there's Rosie—what about her?"

"She's coming down to see me to-morrow; we get married soon as I'm well enough."

"Coming to-morrow, eh? Good. Then to-morrow, Rat, you'll tell her the truth!"

"I told her already how I won it; I wrote it to her."

"Maybe. In fact, I'll bet you did! To-morrow you'll tell her the truth—or else I will."

"Man alive! You can't tell a woman a thing like that! She'd talk! She'd sure talk! All women do!"

"You'll tell her! I'll answer for Rosie not talking."

"I told her the truth in what I wrote in that letter."

"You lie! Pity I didn't let you stay where you was, out on the sand there! Pity I didn't shoot you when I reached you! You skunk! But the harm's done, and you're alive to live it down! But you sha'n't have Rosie!"

"She won't believe you if you tell her."

"'Twon't be me that'll tell her. You will."

"You going to make me?"

"I am. And you know it. You won't get the V. C. or the girl either, if you don't do as I say."

"How about the regiment, then?"

"I'll put it up to the Colonel and leave him to look after the regiment."

There was no resisting Swanwick, and Brunton knew it. He tried at first to laugh down the idea of Swanwick's betraying him; there were no witnesses; nobody would believe Swanwick; the whole regiment had seen the incident and was convinced.

A stronger man might have carried that argument; but the Rat was a moral coward as well as a physical and in the end Swanwick wore him down. When Rosie Webster came to visit him, he had to tell her, with Swanwick listening.

"And now, Rosie," said Big Bill, when Brunton had finished, "which'll you have—him or me?" They were the first words spoken to her after the formal greeting.

"Which of you did I kiss last?" she asked.

"Me," said Swanwick.

"And it's going to be you again, Bill!" she answered him. And she did, with Brunton looking on.

Brunton bought his discharge with his

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wound money and left the regiment; but not before he had been presented with the Victoria Cross and had been told that his country was proud of him. Swanwick paid for a wedding with his and is now a sergeant.

Mrs. Swanwick seems to have the knack of teaching him, for at all events he passed the very first examination after he was married and the school-master no longer has to worry over him. He never told a soul about how Brunton really got his V. C.; he never even spoke of it again to Rosie, and she has absorbed a little of his powers for silence and holds her tongue. So although the True and Tried have one honor on their list that really was not earned, they are never likely to know the truth about it; and in any case the regiment was not to blame. The man who mattered most was Swanwick, and he seemed satisfied. So why blame Rosie?

COUNTED OUT

by George Frederic Stratton

I COULD'NT help liking Fanleigh, although there were reasons which would have caused most men to dislike him heartily. Almost at the outset of our acquaintance he had taken advantage of my inexperience of business and, by the baldest deception had led me to sell a big block of valuable stock at far below its value.

Still later, he had butted into another business transaction, although he had no connection with the matter. He simply looked upon me as an innocent and guileless bird to be plucked, but that time I had my eyes open—by accident, rather than by any shrewdness, it is true,—and I plucked him.

Perhaps it was the satisfaction of evening up with him and the good temper with which he took it, showing him to have some of the characteristics of a true sport, that I couldn't help liking him. Anyway, when he came to me with a proposition to join him in promoting the Cottonwood Irrigation project, I listened. The more I listened, the more I liked him and his project.

He tackled me at the right time, too. From the various investments of the great fortune which my uncle had left me, money was always coming.

And as it all came in and went to swell my already large bank-account, it kept my brain so busy in looking for new invest-

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ments that, even in the midst of a keenly fought golf-match I'd see $100,000 on the ball as I was trying to hole. At the hottest ball games, the rooters howled, "Preferred Stock!" or "Common Stock!" instead of the old familiar slogans.

So the irrigation project looked as welcome as a ten-mile stretch of straight-away road, without any speed-limits, after a long scramble over rock and skiddy clay.

I got hold of Neilson, the Engineer who had built the Cheyenne and Iron Mountain Railroad, which had given me the chance so effectively to uppercut Fanleigh, and we went over to the Cottonwood range to—well, to check up Fanleigh's statements.

We found nothing to excite doubt or criticism in Fanleigh's statements. In fact, the whole project looked far better to me than the dry details of the engineers' maps and reports. No doubt this was because, standing among the lichen-covered boulders and brush-tangles of the rugged foot-hills with the mountain torrent dashing furiously down the gray and yellow scar of its centuries-old bed, the harnessing of it all seemed like a job worthy of men, not only in the undertaking but in the results.

North of us the broken peaks of Pine Mountain reared into hazy, purple mist. Down its sides, gathering width and volume with every hundred yards, rushed the stream, losing itself among the foot-hills in a deep rock-sided channel. South were the thousands of acres of semi-arid land, lonely and tenantless, except for a small bunch of cattle making their way toward the water-hole and breaking into an ungainly trot as they neared it.

It took but a few keen glances to see that the mountain torrent directed over that worthless land would turn it into the finest of productive farms. Long before we got back to the car I was as full of enthusiasm as Fanleigh and had decided to join him in the project.

IT WAS some time before I got the first suspicion that mountain ranges and canyons, trout-filled streams, and treeless plains can conceal as much business crookedness as murky workshops or mahogany-furnished offices. I had been down to Texas to look after some railroad contracts for the Ottinger Timber Company, of which I was president and as soon as I got back I went up to the Cottonwood Range again, taking Neilson with me.

Fanleigh had hustled all right. The big concrete dam was well started and plainly showed the outlines of the great storage reservoir which would hold back the water through the Winter and Spring months until required on the outlying lands. Everything looked all right there and we sauntered down the bed of the stream to look at the feeder canal, which was being dug across the plain.

But before we reached it we stopped at a big alder-fringed pool. Mr. Neilson's eyes were fixed on the rock-ledge which partly formed the sides of the pool.

Presently I heard an exclamation and he strode away from me. He forced through the tangle of brush, I following, and, at the lower end of the pool, stopped amid the rotted foundations of some buildings. Quickly glancing at that, he went to the edge of the stream and peered into its depths. As I joined him he pointed below and exclaimed,

"Clayton, look at that!"

The stream was eight or ten feet deep, but clear and, stretching across the bottom in a straight line, was a row of big stones. At intervals a short log or beam stuck up.

"Did you ever hear that there had been a small mill and a dam here?" he asked.

"Never!"

"Well, you see there has," he muttered. Then in a flash he again inquired, "Have you bought rights along this stream?"

"Fanleigh said there was nothing to buy," I retorted. "That we interfered with no one's rights, as we let the water go through as it always has done."

Neilson whistled and looked pretty serious. "I'd advise you to look into this. Some one has had a dam here. That means water-right. If you hold water back in your reservoir for eight months in the year, the owner of this right can jump on you. See?"

I saw it plainly enough, but felt that Fanleigh had covered that and I told the engineer so.

"Probably he has," he retorted. But I saw a glimmer of doubt in his eyes and I also felt a strange uneasiness myself.

I sat down on a rock to think it over, while Neilson followed the stream down to the mouth of the canal.

He had barely got out of sight, when I heard a slight rustle in the bush behind

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me. Turning, I saw a man approaching. He came on slowly and not very confidently.

"This is Mr. Ottinger, I believe?" he said in a tone and manner that gave the lie to his appearance, for his clothes were wofully shabby, his face showed a stubby ten-days' growth of hair, and his eyes had the weary, heartsick look of a self-accusing derelict.

"It is," I answered.

"Can you give me a job on this work?"

"What! Do you really want work?"

"I do, sir," he replied simply.

"What can you do?"

"I'm an engineer. I can run a line, or levels, and see that they are followed."

"You'll have to confess, my friend, that your appearance doesn't back up your statements. What's wrong with you?"

"Klondike and whisky! Too much money one time, too little another." His tones were weary and spiritless, yet there was something back of them that made me think that there was—well—something back.

"Any more to tell?" I asked.

"Nothing more creditable," he murmured, shrugging his shoulders. "It's the old miserable story; the homesickness, the excitement of success; then taking things as they come, going with the current mentally and morally. Still," he added slowly, "I'm away from all that now and if I got to work again, I'd be all right. I don't want to promise much, but—give me a chance, won't you?"

"You look as though you might be worth it," I said, "but you'll have to take whatever there is." I scribbled a note to the foreman of the work and handed it to the derelict.

"Give that to Dawson. You'll find him up around the reservoir. Don't see him until to-morrow. Get over to the town first, and have a shave and all that goes with it." I threw in a rolled-up greenback with the advice.

He looked at me with the first gleam of earnestness or ambition he had shown and then, slipping the bill into his pocket, he strode away without another word.

Neilson returned and we chatted as gaily as usual on the ride back, but not about the irrigation project. As I dropped him at his house, he said,

"Look into that water right, Clayton. It may give you serious trouble."

I'd been thinking of it on the way back.

"Don't speak of it to any one else at present," I cautioned. "I'll look into it, all right; clear to the bottom!"

Of course my first impulse had been to ask Fanleigh about it, but dismissed that as quickly as it came, for I'd seen enough of his business methods to teach me to get his motives from others, if possible, instead of from him. So I went to a title insurance company and asked them to find out who owned the old mill-site on the Cottonwood stream. They had done some work for me on the mess I got into about the railroad.

They got me as clear a statement on this as they had on the other. The original owner was an old fellow name Schofield, who used to run a saw-mill up there. Six months before—just after we had formed the irrigation company—Schofield had sold to a man named Eppsworth. I now put the matter into the hands of a detective agency. They found that Eppsworth was an uncle of Fanleigh's wife and, although he had paid five thousand dollars cash for the mill-site, he'd never been known to have five hundred, or even fifty dollars, in cash, at any one time. He was a little harness maker and repairer in the village of Benson, one hundred and fifty miles away from the mill-site.

Fanleigh had visited him just before the sale and together they had gone to Storville, the county seat of the Cottonwood district, and had called on the lawyer who afterward made the deeds and the transfer.

So it was all clear. Fanleigh had bought the place secretly and was holding it secretly, for what purpose I could only make a crude guess.

I WENT to Starr, the broker and promoter who had previously given me some points on how to play the other fellow's game.

He greeted me in his usual hearty, jovial manner: "My dear Ottinger, I haven't seen you since you let Fanleigh skin you on that railroad business. Hi, don't get mad! I remember now, that it was you who did the skinning."

"Yes," I laughed, "and it seems that I'm still in the tannery business, although I haven't yet decided whether I'm the tanner or the tannee."

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He gleamed as if a timely and topical story were in sight and, unlocking a typewriter cabinet, revealed, instead of the machine, a bottle of cocktails. He filled the glasses, tossed a box of cigars on the desk and smiled. "Now, we're ready for the worst, Ottinger," he said.

I told him what bothered me and he drank in every word, gleaming with admiration as he declared,

"That's Fanleigh, all right! It's just his stamp of work. Now! How about your stock?"

"There's seven hundred and fifty thousand issued. Fanleigh took one-third; I one-third and the rest was sold in small lots."

"Exactly! Well, it's all clear, I think. Of course, the wide-open view of the matter is that Fanleigh means to hold up the company for a snug little profit on that mill-site. That's all right, so far, but it isn't far enough for Fanleigh—not by a jugful! Fanleigh's going deeper. Here's what'll happen, Ottinger. As soon as you are ready to operate, this Eppsworth, the ostensible owner of the place, will demand that you let the water come down, not only during the four irrigation months, but for every day in the year. And, if you can't store water, you'd have none when you need it.

"Now watch! The moment he makes that demand, Fanleigh will go up in the air. He'll give you and every one else the impression that the company is ruined. Naturally, the stock will tumble—tumble 'way down. Quite likely he'll come to you as a dear old personal friend and advise you to save yourself by selling at 50 or 40 or even 30—wherever he can drive it to. What he won't advise you of, though, is that he is picking it all up himself at those bargain rates."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, as the full force of this burst on me. "I never thought that far. I could see that he might hold us up for an outrageous price for that right."

"Two birds with one stone!" laughed Starr. "It's a freeze-out game—one at which Fanleigh is an expert. He'll scare all those little stockholders blue. He hopes, too, to inject a fine tint of the same color into yourself. He figures that when he winds up he'll own all the stock that you fellows paid par for, which he'll get for 40 or 30."

"Great Scott!" I whined. "Isn't it possible to do business on the square?"

"Sure thing!" he retorted. "Only you've often got to teach the other fellow that glorious principle." He laughed joyously as he declared that, and then chuckled, "You've got him all right, Ottinger, if we haven't diagnosed the case incorrectly; and if we have, we'll know it in time. Now, of course, before any sign of this trouble occurs, Fanleigh will quietly sell all, or as much as he can, of his stock at par. You say that the project is looked at favorably?"

"It certainly is! The possible profits are very large."

"Exactly! So Fanleigh will unload all he can. Then, when he's put his dear old uncle Eppsworth on to you and crowded the stock down to one-third of its value, he'll buy it in again. His outlook is good for a profit of a couple of hundred thousand made out of his friends, besides securing a great majority of the stock at forty cents on the dollar, or less. Fanleigh's not happy unless he's in absolute control of his own and every other stockholder's money. Got that all absorbed, Clayton?"

"It's clear enough," I muttered.

"And what'll you do about it?" he grinned.

"Buy every share he sells as fast as he offers it—and he'll not get it back!" I growled.

He stretched out his arm and said, "Shake! You're growing. Every time I see you, I see some of your old uncle's traits bursting through. He'd never expostulate with a man who was trying to beat him. He'd slam him till he got him on his knees and then just as likely he'd help him to a new start and tell him to be good. Let's go and have some lunch. A little stock project is the finest tonic in the world.

II

I WENT back to Cheyenne wondering, not if I should be fool enough ever to get into a deal with Fanleigh again, but whether he would ever be fool enough to get up against me again; for I felt that I had him cornered on his own game.

Nothing happened until the dam was finished, the sluice-gates closed and all the water which came down the stream was

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piling up in the great storage reservoir. Then Fanleigh opened the game. His stock came on the market, although, as we had not then opened transfer books, his name as a seller did not appear; nor did mine as a buyer. Starr, of course, looked after my end, and in a few weeks two hundred thousand dollars' worth of stock was transferred from Fanleigh's safe to mine. The price averaged 90.

Then one day Fanleigh came to my office, his hair rumpled and a face as long as a horse's. He tossed a letter on my desk and gasped,

"Read that!"

It was from a law firm in Benson, stating that their client, Eppsworth, had instructed them to demand the opening of our sluice-gates, so the water could run freely down the stream as before. It intimated that he intended immediately to rebuild the dam and mill and required his water-power.

I looked him square in the eye and said, "Strange, isn't it, that we didn't know of this water-right, before?"

"It's been abandoned for six years," he growled. "D'ye know what it means to us, Clayton? Every dollar we've put into that project is wasted! If we can't hold the water back through Winter and Spring, there'll be none to use in Summer; not enough to moisten a hundred acres. It's a dead loss!"

"Psh!" I exclaimed. "Of course this man will sell out. He may ask a big price and we'll have to pay it, I suppose. But it won't break the company, or the project either!"

He glared as if he would have liked to hammer that idea out of my head. "Some men can get lots of twaddling optimism out of any misfortune!" he sneered. "I can't!" And then he strode from the office.

I looked at the next morning's papers, fully prepared for what I saw—the big headlined report that the Cottonwood Irrigation Company was practically put out of business. The smaller stockholders flocked to Fanleigh and to me to find out how they stood. Fanleigh echoed the papers, but I said all I could to encourage them. I could not, at that stage of the game, tell them that it was all Fanleigh's scheme, but I did assure them that the trouble could be adjusted—that the stock wouldn't suffer. From several to whom a drop of fifty per cent. in their stock would mean a loss of hard-earned savings, I bought stock at par.

But most of them looked upon me as a green kid at any business and depended on Fanleigh. Pessimism cuts in deeper than optimism, and Fanleigh and the papers rubbed it in all right. The stock made ten point drops at 60 and below, and although Fanleigh's brokers were grabbing for it, mine were just as lively and I got most of it.

Then suddenly, unexpectedly, and as welcome as the deciding play of a series of hard-fought games, came the winning point; and it came from the derelict.

He came into my office one morning and, although his face showed the strong character that first impressed me, his general appearance and his dress were wonderfully improved.

"I'm glad I caught you in, Mr. Ottinger," he said very earnestly, "for I've discovered something that you ought to know at once. That's why I got leave of absence and made the special trip."

"Sounds interesting!" I said, pushing over a box of cigars.

He selected one, but went on with his story before lighting it.

"There isn't much to occupy spare time up there at the reservoir, you know. So I've tramped along the hills a good deal. About a half a mile from the reservoir I ran across an old mine—abandoned. There's no shaft; just a tunnel driven into the mountain. I'm always interested in those things and I explored that tunnel. It led through the rock formation clear under the reservoir; I determined that afterward with instruments. And here's the trouble, Mr. Ottinger; at one point there is scarcely one foot of rock—and that is poor—between that tunnel and the floor of your reservoir! If any trifling disturbance occurred there'd be a break and all your water would rush out through that old mine. A single stick of dynamite would do it."

"It can be blocked up, I suppose." I suggested.

"Certainly! No difficulty about that if it's done in time. Even if a break occurred first, the repairing would be only a small job, but the reservoir would have to empty itself before the work could be done. You'd lose one season."

I had to lean back and think—for a faint glimmering idea came to me that this was

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my chance. The glimmer quickly brightened into as strong a light as an acetylene lamp.

"Have you spoken to any one else about this, Henshaw?"

"I have not, sir. I thought it best to report only to you." He laughed slightly as he continued, "Your stock's having a little flurry, I know, and of course you don't want any new trouble to become public."

"You're wise!" I exclaimed. "Now, I want you to dine with me this evening. I'd like you to meet Neilson. He's an engineer and I think you'll suit each other."

He looked blank and said, "I promised to go back to-night. The superintendent will expect me in the morning."

"I'll wire him." I said. "You'll have no trouble over that. But, Henshaw, do not say one word to anybody about your discovery. I depend upon you absolutely for that."

"You'll not be disappointed, Mr. Ottinger."

Then he left me with the understanding that he'd be at my club at six o'clock.

There ought to be a Capitalist Union, with an ironclad rule that eight or nine hours a day should be the limit, the same as bricklayers and machinists have. I'll bet there hadn't been a day since I took charge of my uncle's big estate that I hadn't worked twice that number of hours. On a motor-trip, at a banquet, fighting out a golf-match or fishing the streams, my mind would constantly go back to what I had done, what I ought to have done, and what I was going to do to-morrow. So it was on this day and partly through the very enjoyable evening with the two engineers, and then again through the night.

But I had it all clear in the morning. I saw that I had a chance—a more than even chance—to teach Mr. Fanleigh that playing hog with me was not profitable.

"HENSHAW," I said, when he came to my office the next day, "you have done me a great service in this matter, and you can do me much more if you will."

He leaned forward, his fine, brown eyes filled with earnestness. "Mr. Ottinger, some day I'll tell you what you saved me from. When you know that, you'll know that I've got a big debt to pay."

I shook his outstretched hand heartily and went on with my end. "You know Mr. Fanleigh?"

"I've seen him several times up at the plant, but I can hardly call that an acquaintance."

"It's plenty, Henshaw. Now, I want you to go to Fanleigh and tell him just what you've told me, but on no account to let him know that you have told me!"

"That's easy," he laughed.

"Then after you've seen him," I continued, "I want you to come back and report to me exactly how he took it, how he looked, what he said, and the questions he asked. He may offer you some reward—quite likely will. Don't refuse it, Henshaw, on any account. And don't forget to tell him, as you told me, that a simple stick of dynamite would bring that rock down!"

He glanced at me curiously; then a gleam of mingled surprise and understanding lit up his eyes and he left me.

III

WE dined alone that evening and he told me about Fanleigh. Henshaw was a close observer and I got a photographic impression of Fanleigh's attitude when he heard the story; the scowl of dismay, quickly followed by a glow of satisfaction; his injunction to absolute silence on the matter; his request for an accurate map of the old mine tunnel, and his searching questions as to Henshaw's knowledge of the strength of rock, particularly in resisting dynamite. Emphasizing it all was his check for fifty dollars, which he assured the engineer would be doubled if no rumor of the threatened disaster became public.

I gave Henshaw some further instructions and he went back to Cottonwood on the night train. I waited, peacefully and happily.

But not for long. What I expected commenced. More stock was offered for sale and knowing, as I did, the location of all the stock and that Fanleigh had unloaded all of his, I knew that he was selling short. My brokers took up every block he offered. His men sold cautiously, so as to excite no suspicion, and my men bought the same way for the same reason.

But they kept at it until Fanleigh probably felt that he dared go no further. Then came the last innings. It was opened by

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a telegram from the superintendent stating that the bottom seemed to have gone out of the reservoir; the water was running out through the old mine tunnel. Fanleigh did not come over to see me; instead, he went up to the plant and the newspaper reports must have been written from telegrams sent direct from him, for they simply groaned. The calamity of Eppsworth's insisting on our opening the dam was doubled and quadrupled by this disaster to the reservoir itself—so the papers said.

The stock ought to have gone down—ought to have slumped to 15 or even 10 with no takers. But it did not, because the only holder of any amount of stock was myself and I stubbornly refused to scare!

I do not know—I never have known—how much of a good time Fanleigh had during the next two or three weeks, but I'd have given a first-class runabout car for a thousand feet of moving picture film that showed his feelings. I could imagine him—without any great stretch, either—pacing his room at midnight or dawn wondering why that stock didn't drop twenty or thirty points and enable him to cover his shorts with a profit of a small fortune.

Then I played the last card, or rather my broker did, They bid up Cottonwood Common from 45, where it stood when Fanleigh sold short, to 70. Then Fanleigh went on his knees, for he had to settle for those short sales—ten thousand shares—and that meant a quarter of a million dollars.

HE came to see me, begging easy terms. If it had meant ruin to him, I'd have let up. But he could stand it, although it probably wasn't very convenient.

"You planned atrociously, Fanleigh!" I asserted. "Not only against me, but against all the small stockholders. You'll have to pay. I'll not abate a fraction!"

He saw that I meant it, that he had to take his medicine.

He rose from his chair with a dull, savage glare in his eyes. As he turned at the door I caught a glimpse—almost a smile—of anticipated vengeance. But I wasn't quite through with him.

"There's something else, Fanleigh, that will be needed to close up this affair completely as I think you want it closed."

"I'm in no hurry to close it up!" he sneered.

"You will be in a minute or so! That old mill-site matter must be settled!"

His face paled slightly, but he recovered himself instantly. "Go to—er—Eppsworth," he snarled. "What have I to do about the mill-site?"

"You're not acting in your usual sportsmanlike way," I warned. "Now listen! Suppose I report to the directors, with proof, that you are the owner of the mill-site; that you bought it before our dam was started and that Eppsworth's threats are your threats, made simply to smash the stock—as you did smash it—down to 45. Now stop! There's something else. Suppose I tell them—again with proof—that you were fully informed of that weak spot in our reservoir floor for two weeks before some one blew it in with dynamite; that you kept that knowledge to yourself until you had put out a long line of shorts and that the stick of dynamite was used, not especially to damage the reservoir, but to drive the stock still further down to a figure where you could cover your shorts with an enormous profit. Are you prepared to face the man in court whom you engaged to use that dynamite? I don't think you are, Fanleigh."

He was licked! I saw it in a moment and almost instinctively I went back to my college tricks and counted ten, mentally.

He was counted out. He slumped down in his chair like a doll from which half the sawdust has trickled.

"You don't want that publicity," I went on cheerfully. "And you won't get it, if you deed that mill-site at once to the company. If you don't, you'll——"

But he interrupted me. He staggered to the door, white and nerveless. There he turned and gasped.

"I'll do it! Do it all as you say!"

"Score, Eighteen up!" I murmured to myself; but I swear I couldn't help feeling sorry for him. He was so pitiful a wreck.

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THE TALE OF A JUG

by H·D·Couzens

ONCE upon a time there was a poor fisherman who cast his nets with no success worth mentioning. Finally, breathing a prayer to his particular gods, he cast them forth a last time and upon this occasion brought from the depths a jug, sealed with the Seal of Solomon, which, on being opened, gave forth in the form of a fine vapor a Genie with great powers for good or evil. Various adventures followed.

So runs the Arabian tale, and so, too, with few minor changes, runs the tale of another fisherman who lived at a little village called Waimea, on the island of Kauai. His full name was Kaleipuaolani Oka Ainmauka, but the missionaries had christened him Robert, which became, in mellifluous Hawaiian, Lopaka.

He was not poor like the other fishermen, for he owned a *palaoa*, which is the tooth of a sperm whale carved into a hook, beautifully browned in wood-smoke and worn with a thick necklace made of innumerable strands of human hair. He also possessed a huge calabash of *kou*-wood which had once been used by the great Kamehameha for the human flesh which he used as shark-bait.

The *palaoa* could never be worn by any one not of royal lineage, but Lopaka was of the blood of chieftains and the use of the great calabash did not in the least interfere with its present utility as a receptacle for the family *poi*, and the possession of these treasures made Lopaka a man of note in the little village of which he was, barring the few white men who lived there in 1843, the most prominent inhabitant.

There is but one more variation from the Arabian tale. Lopaka seldom had poor success at fishing. He was too seasoned and expert a craftsman to fail at his calling, and when he went forth to sink his lines or cast his nets there were results. He studied all conditions of wind, sea and sky and knew, almost to a fish, what his day's toil would bring forth.

On this occasion he did, indeed, breathe a prayer to Mana, his particular god and when his net brought up the jug there was also a comfortable bulk of *akuli*, *opelu* and *opio* within its meshes.

The jug was encrusted with barnacles and other marine growths. In lieu of the Seal of Solomon it had a plain lead seal such as you may see on carboys of acids, except that this one had an odd, spring-like arrangement to hold it in place. It had obviously lain in the sea for many years. It was a plain jug, showing between the intricate formations of marine growths that it was glazed, and that the lower half was dark brown shading to a lighter hue toward the upper half.

Lopaka picked it up cautiously and something instantly stung him on the hand.

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He cried out in pain and was about to toss it into the sea when his wife interposed, being femininely curious as to the strange object brought forth from the deep. The creature that had bitten Lopaka was a small eel with a green head which lived in an abandoned barnacle shell, and its bite was painful but not serious.

Nalimu, Lopaka's wife, carried the jug home with a withe of palm-leaf through the handle, boiled it to remove the vegetable and animal life and set it proudly beside the *palaoa* and the calabash.

"It will bring us good luck," she said; "surely it is a gift of Mana, the shark-god, and inside is a good spirit."

Lopaka showed his aching hand. "The good luck is well concealed," said he grimly. "Nevertheless you may keep it, little one, unless it shows further malice."

In this fashion came the talisman to be one of the treasures of Lopaka.

There were times when he was tempted to open the jug. It might contain *Wai kini*, which is gin, or *Wai kulu*, which is whisky, or even the fiery but satisfying beverage known as Perry Davis's Pain Killer, but on being shaken it gave forth no welcome sloshing sound, the seal seemed firmly set in place and Nalimu was very certain that it was a talisman brought to Lopaka's net by his patron deity, the shark. If opened, she argued, the magic it contained would vanish into thin air, and the jug was, therefore, suspended from the wall with coconut fiber near the cherished *palaoa*.

Nalimu had no mind to keep this lucky find a secret. Her little tongue wagged diligently about the village and presently she had persuaded Lopaka to give a great *luau* (feast) as a celebration. This was a great success, for every one in the village attended and many came from as far away as Koloa. There was much raw fish and octopus—all that the sea afforded, in fact, with pig and *poi*-dog cooked underground and a great deal of square-face gin from the *haole* trading-store.

There was an *oli*-singer who made up an interminable chant about the mysterious jug, and the Hawaiians were much impressed. The white men, used to dealing indulgently with the native fancies, were amused, with the exception of the missionary, a new arrival from Boston, who was greatly shocked and distressed at the persistence of what he called "rank idolatry and voodooism."

AND the talisman proved a very good one indeed. That year there was a black blight on the *taro*, and Lopaka's patch was the only one that escaped. The red fish came in great schools that tinged the sea the color of blood, and Lopaka's nets were always the heaviest and, to crown all, though three little girl babies had been buried near their grass house, there was born to Nalimu a male child, a lusty brown chief who was one day to wear a yellow feather cloak in the palace of his monarch at Honolulu.

When the missionary from Boston heard of all of these wonders he was much annoyed because the credit was given to the jug. He preached stern and powerful sermons against the folly of placing trust in heathen charms and idols. He was a very young missionary and his Hawaiian was faulty, so that the younger members of his flock sometimes giggled irreverently. The wise heads of the village agreed with him publicly, but privately decided he would know better when he was older.

Now there was a man who lived alone in a palm-leaf shack on the beach between Waimea and Kekaha. His name was Makaula and he was very unfortunate and had a bad heart in consequence. His body was so racked and distorted with the Chinese Evil that the fingers of one hand were gone and the lobes of his ears hung down to his shoulders. This made no difference to his brethren of the beach, for they were accustomed to look with indifference on most physical defects or ailments.

The case against Makaula was that he had red-rimmed eyes, the unpardonable sin of Polynesia. So marked he must live all his life alone and no woman would show him favor, and Makalua was, therefore, an object of mild derision. His diseased body left him almost helpless as a fisherman and though he never wanted for the necessities of life amid the ungrudged hospitality of the beach, it is perfectly obvious that he ardently desired a number of things. For many nights he brooded, covetously, on the virtues of the talisman. What would he not give to be under its benign favor? He, too, was under the patronage of a shark-god; a very inferior deity, too impotent to help him in his troubles.

For perhaps a month the poor, broken, half-mad creature sat in his isolation crooning to himself and lashing his feeble

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spark of courage, and then one morning Nalimu awoke suddenly and startled her lord with a shrill cry. Makaula lay beneath the *palaoa*, stone dead. His red-rimmed eyes were wide open and staring and his loathsome face was stamped with an expression of intense surprise. Beside him lay the talisman, intact, and on Makaula's broken body there was no mark or bruise save those of his ailment, excepting an entirely insignificant one. His lips and the rims of his nostrils appeared to have faded the merest fraction of a shade.

Lopaka hung the jug tenderly back in its place. The fame of its virtues was now secure. What could be more significant? Makaula had tried to steal the jug, and its presiding genius had smitten him in the act. Thereafter all doubt of the talisman vanished. Lopaka and the missionary argued it out at great length, the missionary with some heat in spite of his halting Hawaiian vocabulary; Lopaka calmly, with far more gentle oratory than the missionary possessed, as one serene and immovable with uncontrovertible facts in his possession.

II

THE following year came the Great Sickness. It was only measles, but being a strange and outlandish disease and the Hawaiians having no skill or patience with it, forty thousand of them perished. When the hot rash broke out on their bodies they took to the swimming-pools, seeking relief in the cool water, and so they died.

Waimea did not escape the epidemic entirely, but there were comparatively few fatalities. Nalimu carried the talisman from house to house of those who were sick, in company with an old *kahuna*, or witch-doctor, who made prayers and incantations, but if the truth be told the fact that Waimea was touched but lightly was due as much as anything to the efforts of the young missionary. Confronted by a very tangible trouble, he proved himself a man of action and resources, and besides, he knew all about measles. Wherever he was obeyed, the plague passed on, but credit was given, nevertheless, to the talisman and the old *kahuna*.

Not far from the coast of Kauai is the little island of Niihau. There were no white men there and the natives were very simple and primitive, holding to all the old beliefs and traditions. It is a long canoe-journey, but they often went back and forth bringing pigs or sheep, a few of which were even then raised on the little island. Niihau had heard all about the magic jug of Lopaka and spoke of it with awe and reverence.

The headman of Niihau was an old man, wrinkled and blind, who fifty years before had been the King's *Mu*, or executioner. He it was who had provided material for human sacrifice, killing his victims with a club from behind. He also it was who had kept the enclosure by the temple full of live, human shark-bait, slaughtering the poor wretches at the command of the King. He was greatly feared and respected and his commands were law.

When the measles came to Niihau, brought by some lone voyager returning home in his canoe, the blind old headman made fierce incantations to his gods, but one by one the people sickened and died. All day and night there was the sound of wailing, and there was imminent danger of the population being wiped out. Daily there occured the sight of afflicted ones, maddened by the prickly rash, throwing themselves into the sea, and close to the shore was an unprecedented gathering of long, triangular fins. At this crisis the old man called a council of all the able-bodied men left. They gathered in the long canoe-shed which had been darkened in the time of mourning.

"Behold," said he, "we are dying! Soon we shall all be dead like our brothers from this pestilence which slays swiftly and in secret, even as *I* have slain for my King in the good days that are gone. In the night I have taken council of the gods and this is their answer: 'The pestilence is the work of Manna, the shark, who would destroy us. His servants wait us yonder. There is no help for us, save in the talisman of Lopaka at Waimea.'

"So say the gods. Go, then, my brothers who are young and strong. Take such arms as you can find and go in canoes to Waimea. Kill Lopaka or bring him here a prisoner, but bring also, if you would live, the talisman! Only by this means can the pestilence be averted. Go!"

"But," said a young man respectfully, "why should we slay Lopaka? Would he not come with us bringing the jug and lending us what aid it has to give? He

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is a kindly man and much loved in his village."

"Fool!" said the headman; "what use would this talisman be as the property of another? The gods are very bitter and vengeful. If Lopaka returned home, taking the jug, the pestilence would return again. Am I a fool to be questioned by young men who have no sense? Go, I tell you! Slay all who resist and come back with the talisman. Oh, if I had but my eyes and the strength of my arm again I would teach you what it means to kill and kill and smell the blood of men in your nostrils!"

One by one, in silence, his listeners stole out, and all day there were gatherings in little groups who talked in whispers. A few there were who, inflamed by the old man's talk, were roused by the blood-lust and these urged on their fellows. There was a hasty collection of weapons, some of them old and treasured heirlooms, war-clubs and spears, a few fowling-pieces and muskets and one seaman's cutlass, taken long since at the historic cutting out of the *Eleanor*; and at early evening the party set forth.

They returned the next afternoon, many bandaged and bloodied, for there had been a glorious fight on the beach at Waimea. In the bottom of a canoe lay Lopaka and Nalimu, tightly bound, and the white missionary, who had fought the invaders stubbornly with his fists and been badly beaten with a wooden club. The precious talisman was borne in triumph to the old headman, who fondled it lovingly and laughed low, wild, maniacal laughter that chilled the blood of the listener.

"Bravely done, my children!" he cried. "Oh, my brave ones, my infants! To-night the gods will help us. As for the three you have brought, see that they are kept bound, and to-morrow you shall lead me to them, placing a club in my hand, and I will show you that the King's *Mu* can still slay! The white man, being a priest, will be a sacrifice to the gods!"

Now Lopaka and Nalimu, hearing these words, were afraid. The missionary, being still bewildered and only half conscious, did not understand. The three were carried into a small hut and there left alone while the surviving people of Niihau gave themselves up to a debauch of *hula*-dancing to the music of tom-toms and nose-flutes.

Lopaka and Nalimu talked in low tones through the night very sweetly as becomes a man and wife who are to die at sunrise, and Nalimu shed many tears for her little boy whom she thought never to see again. Toward morning the white man, coming to himself, tried to give what consolation he could and he and Lopaka talked theology, though Nalimu would have none of this consolation.

"Look you, white man!" said she, "If we die, we die, and that is an end. Your prayer-talk is no good. If there is help for you, look to your own gods. Our gods are the gods of Hawaii. Never yet since it came from the sea has the jug failed us and now it alone can help us."

TOWARD morning the noises became subdued and finally died away altogether. Niihau slept and so also, exhausted and chafed by their bonds, slept the three prisoners. The morning sun shot over the rim of the sea and slowly climbed toward the zenith and still there was no sound nor sign of life. It was the sun, shining on her upturned face as she lay in the doorway of the hut, that woke Nalimu. She blinked, looked overhead in wonder and woke the others. Outside, the impudent sea-birds strutted and pecked at the very threshold and still the sun climbed higher and higher in the heavens.

Then they saw a woman coming toward them, walking lazily, dragging her feet and rubbing her eyes. She passed the hut and went toward the long canoe-shed where the headman had held his council. They heard her call, once, twice and thrice, low and musically at first, then louder; and then on their ears there smote a piercing scream that sent the startled birds seaward in a whirling cloud.

The missionary had not been idle in the long morning hours. His hands were free and he had just cut the lashings round his feet with his knife. He did a like service for the other two and they together went stiffly and unsteadily out of the hut. Before the canoe-shed the woman lay groveling in the sand in hysterics. They spoke to her and got no reply. Then the three tiptoed softly to the entrance of the shed and peeped within.

The missionary started and involuntarily removed his hat. "Merciful God!" said he, in awe-struck voice. Upon the ground, grouped in various attitudes about the

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supine form of the old headman, lay what had been the able-bodied population of Niihau—all dead! Dead and cold they were, every one, and on the face of each was the look of intense surprise, and about the lips and nostrils the slight fading of the pigment of the skin.

The old blind man was huddled in the center, his eyeballs starting from his head; and in his arm the talisman was hugged tight, a long, skinny finger hooked about the queer spring arrangement that held the seal. Nalimu, with a cry of triumph, wrenched the jug from the old man's arms. "Ha, mikinari!" she cried. "Where was *your* God last night? It was the spirit in the jug! It has killed our enemies! Come, Lopaka, let us go!"

The woman at the door had gone, and the surviving population, women, children and a few old men who were not stricken with measles, were gathered in a body. They made way for Nalimu and Lopaka in the silence of abject fear. The missionary followed, dumb for the time being before a mystery too great for his fathoming. He helped them find food and stock a small canoe and bade them godspeed as they set forth for Waimea. "Tell them that I will be there in a few days," said he. "I am going to help these people bury their dead and try and cure their sick."

Lopaka and his wife made a quick voyage and they sang all the way. At Waimea they told the marvelous story and there was a great feast of thanksgiving at which the wonderful jug was an object of deep reverence and regard, and the story was told and retold, with endless variations, just as it is told to this very day.

The missionary remained on Niihau until his self-appointed duties were fulfilled and upon his return to Waimea was transferred, at his own request, to another island where he hoped to find more fruitful soil. As for Lopaka and Nalimu there is no reason to doubt that the jug remained an infallible charm forever after.

III

THIS is the whole story of the Magic Jug just as it is told to-day by the natives of Waimea with a great deal of oratorical flourish, dear to the Hawaiian heart. And it is a true tale. Like most true tales it has another side to it that used to be told by old Billy Emmons, the drunken beach-comber. Of course no one paid any attention to Billy, for he was an outcast and a very wicked man who could not speak the truth anyhow, having been a seafaring man by profession; but if you wish to be impartial you would naturally like to hear so queer a tale from every side.

The proper way was to approach Billy with a bottle of "square-face" gin. You were on no account to say anything of jugs, because Billy was most irascible when sober and swore wickedly if you broached the subject; but half an hour later you might seek him where he sat on the sand, all covered with flies, and ask him, as man to man, if he knew anything of Lopaka's jug. Then he would speak as follows:

"Lopaka's jug, eh? Umph! Ole Steinmetz's jug's what *I* say! Kanakas all sup—superstitious. All crazy fools! Jug belonged to Steinmetz. Pore ole cuss! Pore ole Dutch—*hic*——" Here Billy would become incoherent and resort to the square-face. After an interval of grief he would resume; "You see, Steinmetz's a perfessor, dyin' o' consumption. He signs in 'Frisco for two years' cruise as passenger, hopin' to get well. He's bird-shark, fish-shark, bug-shark—all o' that. Can call all the fish by their polite names an' forgot more navigation than our ole man ever knew. Takes lunar sights an' dog-star sights, an' has the ole man jumpin' sideways the whole time arguin' where he is on the chart. He's true blue, this Dutchman, though. Has all kind o' chemicals, physics the crew, fixes a busted leg and cuts a felon out o' one man's finger. Always willin' to oblige, he is.

"Well, we're reachin' down to Honolulu from Hongkong an' the ship is that overrun with rats an' cockroaches there's no livin' in peace. Roaches run all over you and eat your grub out o' your hands. an' rats gnaw off your nails while you're asleep. This here Dutchman studies out a scheme an' finally fixes this here jug. From results I see an' hears later on Kauai it's a masterpiece.

"First he fills the jug with salt. Plain ole salt out o' the galley. Then he takes a glass tube, fits it in the stopper and doctors it up so that when you pull the stopper which he has set with a spring, whatever is in the tube drips down on the salt. The

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tube is filled with what he calls mu—muriatic acid. The scheme is to make all tight between bulkheads, tie a line to the stopper, close the hatch to a crack an' pull on the line; then close the hatch altogether for a while, an' when you open up and let the pison out there ain't any rats nor roaches left.

"We never tries it. 'Cause why? 'Cause off Midway ole Steinmetz dies. Pore ole—*hic*—cuss! Well, that's all. What? Oh, well, we comes along here, huggin' the Kauai coast mighty close. Our second mate has stole some of the ole man's rum an' got soused, an' while lookin' around for an eye-opener he finds this here jug of ole Steinmetz's which has been forgot, an' thinks it is Scotch whisky. Bein' at the wheel at the time I hears a horrible whoop an' sees the second mate shoot head-first out of the house an' over the rail, takin' the jug with him. He never comes up. I guess his lungs was burned to a crisp with the whiff he got. This here Kanaka jug is the same one, only some pickled from bein' below so long. Kanakas is ignerant—all ignerant an' superstitious. Have you—*hic*—any more square-face, Cap'n?"

FIGHTING THE TURKS IN MACEDONIA

The Adventures of an Unofficial War Correspondent

by Arthur D. Howden Smith

IF I had never met Sonnichsen I should not have gone to Macedonia. Whether that would have been fortunate for me or not, you shall judge from my story. When I met him Sonnichsen was a motorman on a street-car line somewhere up in the Bronx. But a year before that he had been one of the fighting chiefs, or *voivodes*, of the revolutionary party in Macedonia, a trusted confidant of the dreaded Committee of Three in Sofia, and a man with a price on his head wherever the Crescent flag waved. Before that he had been mixed up in innumerable other adventures of a more or less hazardous sort, concerning which it is not necessary to dilate here.

There remains the fact that Sonnichsen was responsible for my going to the Balkans, and in so far as his personality touches upon that fact it must be made clear. I met Sonnichsen first more or less by accident, and we chatted for some time about his diverse experiences. I mentioned that I was contemplating a trip to Europe that Summer, the Summer of 1907, and inquired idly about the general lay of the land in southeastern Europe. He blinked at me in a slow, ponderous way he had, as if the smoke that curled up from the pipe in his hand irritated his eyes.

"Why don't you drop in on the Macedonians?" he asked quietly.

"It wouldn't be possible, would it?" I answered indifferently, thinking he had spoken in jest.

"Oh, I might give you some letters," he said, after a reflective pause.

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"But will there be anything doing this Summer?" I queried anxiously.

"There's always something doing in Macedonia," he returned sententiously.

"Well, I'm game," I said, not quite sure that I was. "Will it cost very much?"

"It won't cost you as much as if you loafed around Paris and London," replied Sonnichsen.

And he sat down on the porch of his little ramshackle lodging-house without more ado and proceeded to concoct me a series of letters of introduction in English, French, German and Bulgarian to the men who were the presiding powers in the revolutionary conflict that was then racking Turkey in Europe—ay, and that racked it up to the time of the establishment of so-called constitutional government in the Ottoman Empire, and that still sends forth premonitory rumbles.

Those letters give one a good idea of the comprehensive life of my soldier-of-fortune friend. Several were to Russian exiles and well-known Englishmen in London, members of the Balkan Committee, the great body that had for its object the relief of existing conditions in European Turkey; others were to Boris Sarafoff, Ivan Garvanoff and Christo Matoff, the members of the Committee of Three; to Peter Popasoff, Treasurer of the Revolutionary Organization; to Dr. Bogirade Tartartcheff, a distinguished physician of Sofia, himself a Macedonian exile and for many years London representative of the Revolutionary Committee; and to a number of less famous *voivodes* and leaders.

They proved an "open sesame" of unrivaled powers. With them I obtained valuable information in London, before starting on the last lap of my journey diagonally across Europe to its southeastern corner, and with them, I was able to open the magic doors that guarded the secrets of the revolution in its headquarters in the Bulgarian capital. The very afternoon of the day that I climbed down from the Constantinople Express on to the platform of the low, yellow station at Sofia, I started out to find the Committee's headquarters. Now I had had some experience in tracking down South American juntas in New York, but I was somewhat uncertain as to how to go about a search for revolutionists in a strange city.

The language difficulty alone seemed insuperable, and I forthwith appealed to the Commissionaire of the Grand Hotel Bulgaria, Sofia's principal hostelry, situated directly opposite the Palace. The Commissionaire possessed a surprising knowledge of revolutionary activity, I found.

"Oh, yes," he replied calmly, "there are several places to go to. Yes, yes! There is the Café Makedonia, where the *chetniks*, on leave from across the frontier, congregate. And there is the Café Battenburg, where the fighting *voivodes*, who happen to be in town, have their mess. And, finally, there is the Restaurant Balkan.

"If you wish to see Dr. Tartartcheff and M'sieurs Garvanoff and Matoff, the Restaurant Balkan is the place to go to," the Commissionaire assured me. "It is there that they dine every evening with their friends. M'sieu Popasoff sits at the Café Makedonia. But he can wait. Dr. Tartartcheff will present you to him to-morrow. For the present, seek the good Doctor, who speaks the English better than I do."

"You appear to know all about these fellows," I suggested, with some suspicion. "Are you a revolutionist?"

The Commissionaire threw up his hands in horror.

"I a revolutionist?" he shrieked. "I? M'sieu jests. But no. Every one in Sofia knows of the revolution. Why not?" He had regained his composure by now, and smiled sweetly at me. "It is no secret. No, no. It is all open and what you call—above the board, eh?"

WHICH summed up the situation in a nutshell, as I afterward discovered. Bulgaria made no real attempt to hide the fact that she was nothing less than an arms depot, a mobilization point, refuge and supply base for the revolutionary columns that operated against the Turkish troops across the frontier in Macedonia. These columns, or *chetas*, to give them their Bulgarian name, would cross the line at some favorable point, strike as many telling blows as they were able to, and then, as soon as they were hard pressed, flit back again to Bulgarian soil.

My friend the Commissionaire offered to lend me one of the hotel servants for a guide and, accordingly, with the man at my side, I sallied forth shortly before the dinner hour. We walked through the Public Gardens, where Stambuloff, the "Bismarck of

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the Balkans," was shot, and entered a maze of narrow, twisting streets in the old quarter of the town.

Down a meandering side-alley, lined with dirty shops and khans, was the Restaurant Balkan. It was a low, broad room, crowded with tables, its walls stained by smoke, but otherwise unornamented, save by the full-length portrait of the reigning Prince—now Czar—Ferdinand. All of the tables were occupied, and a perfect babel of noises, mingled with a tinkling of knives and forks, nearly deafened me. When I turned to speak to my guide I found that he had vanished, leaving me to face the music alone.

A black-bearded, undersized man, the proprietor, bustled up to me in a moment, however, and inquired in passable French what I wanted. I replied by mentioning Dr. Tartartcheff's name. The proprietor was immediately all smiles. Would I step this way? Dr. Tartartcheff was dining with some friends. And he ushered me to a table in the rear of the restaurant at which sat an unusual group of men.

There was something about every one of them that compelled attention. At the head sat a big man with a cross in one eye, a red face and a bald head. He was Ivan Garvanoff, of the Committee, who, with Boris Sarafoff, was shot in the following December by a disgruntled rival chief. To his right sat a man who looked nothing more than the peasant he was by ancestry, but who spoke in the purest French. He was Christo Matoff, the second member of the Committee. Sarafoff, the third member, was out of town. Of the rest at the table it is only necessary to say that they represented every walk of life—lawyers, journalists, diplomats, merchants, teachers, *voivodes* or chiefs, and doctors, not to speak of several in the brilliant uniforms of the Bulgarian army.

Dr. Tartartcheff sat at the foot, and he greeted me cordially, after he had slit the flap of the envelope I handed to him. He introduced me to the others, all of whom showed themselves unmistakably friendly, and before Sonnichsen's letter had been finished I was engaged in interpreted conversation with half a dozen of them. They wanted to talk about American affairs and the international situation in Europe; but gradually I turned the discourse toward the existing conditions in Macedonia, and asked if I could not be sent across the frontier with one of the *chetas*.* At first, they were all inclined to look askance upon the project.

"You are a small man," said Dr. Tartartcheff. "Do you think you could stand the life? It is very difficult. You can not rest. The *askares*† follow you continually. You must wear sandals for climbing the rocks, and they do not protect your feet. Often you must go without food. When you are tired to weariness it is your bread that you must throw away, so that you may not have to sacrifice any of your ammunition. It is a hard life, sir, and a thankless one. You do not understand the kind of warfare the Turks wage. They show no mercy. It would do you no good to be a non-combatant. They would kill you just the same. The *askares* never take prisoners! There can be no middle course for the man who goes into Macedonia. He goes with the Turks or he goes with the *chetniks*‡—and if he goes with the *chetniks*, he goes as a *chetnik*, armed as a *chetnik*, to fight as a *chetnik!*"

For a moment I felt a little dizzy; I was conscious of that empty feeling around the midriff that is a certain indication of funk. But I saw that the whole tableful were watching me and I pulled myself together somehow. It was a case for bluff, I saw, and tall bluff, at that.

"I understand the risks," I answered, as steadily as I could. "I know what they will be, and I am willing to take them!"

They put their heads together, and a field-officer of infantry, sitting two or three places down, hitched his saber forward and threw a sharp interjection into the conversation. Dr. Tartartcheff turned to me.

"Can you shoot?" he demanded. "All of our men who go across the frontier are deadshots. Do you know how to handle a rifle?"

My previous experience with rifles had been confined to shooting galleries, and a stray expedition, now and then, after jack-rabbits. But if it had been necessary to bluff before, now it was doubly necessary to lie.

"Surely," I replied boldly. "I have been familiar with weapons all my life. I am a graduate of a military school."

Which was true in a way, and evidently

* Bands of revolutionary soldiers.
† Turkish regular soldiers.
‡ Revolutionary soldiers.

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had great influence with them, as they took it for granted that I meant some institution like West Point or their own *École Militaire*, to which the pick of the Bulgarian boys are sent.

The field officer of infantry favored me with a glance of approval, and said something to Garvanoff, who had been comparatively silent. The other army officers at the table nodded their heads, and Dr. Tartartcheff turned to me again.

"The gentlemen of the Committee seem to look more favorably upon your request," he said. "There is a *cheta* commanded by Peter Mileff, *voivode* of the *raon** of Navarrokop, which is to start in a few days for Macedonia. Navarrokop is in the northeastern part of Macedonia and near the frontier, so that if you become tired it will not be difficult to send you back. But you are to understand that you do this entirely at your own risk. We can not afford the men to give you a large escort. Do you agree?"

The most I had expected was a brief jaunt across the frontier with a scouting party, and here I was being invited to join a real fighting *cheta!* I was agreeably surprised. I say agreeably, because my first feeling of funk had disappeared and I was only conscious of the exhilaration of a dangerous enterprise.

"I agree," I said.

The field officer of infantry, who had been curling his bristly mustache, looked enquiringly at Dr. Tartartcheff and then leaped to his feet. Every one else rose, laughingly, glasses poised high in air.

"*Viva!*" they cried. "*Viva, Americansky chetnik!*"

SO THEY accepted me into their comradeship, and I never had cause to regret it. Personally, I found the insurgent leaders of all parties invariably clever and pleasant to get along with. Practically all were self-made men, and I never heard an adverse moral criticism of one of them, except Sarafoff, who had a villainous reputation.

I might go on at some length to describe my experiences in the Bulgarian capital. Sofia swarmed with spies, Turkish and Bulgarian, the former employed by the Ottoman agent resident, and the latter in the pay of the several factions into which the revolutionary party was split and of the Bulgarian Government, which liked to keep a close watch on the trend of Macedonian affairs for its own purposes. Naturally, as a new arrival and an open acquaintance of a number of the insurgent chiefs, I was impartially tracked by all the spies, a sensation which was more amusing then anything else.

It was not inconvenient, indeed, until one afternoon several days after the dinner at the Restaurant Balkan, when Peter Popasoff, to whom Dr. Tartartcheff had introduced me, came with Peter Mileff, the *voivode* of the *cheta* I was to go with, to take me to be measured for my uniform. Mileff was a splendid fellow, all lithe bone and muscle, a first-rate fighting-man, a good administrator, and like all the *voivodes*, something of a lawyer, a doctor and a teacher. We became fast friends at our first interview.

The two men called on me at my hotel, and before leaving they cast doubtful glances at the street below, where a couple of men were lounging under the Palace wall. Mileff laughed and muttered something through his mustache, and Popasoff rang the bell. To the attendant who answered, they said something in Bulgarian, and without showing a trace of a smile, the man escorted us down a back way and out of the building by way of the kitchen. My respect for spies was minimized from that moment. They had utterly neglected to consider the possibility of a rear exit.

Having safely dodged espionage, Mileff and Popasoff escorted me to a photographer's shop on the Square of the Cathedral which was only a photographer's shop for those who wanted to have their pictures taken. For those who had more far-reaching desires it was a revolutionary depot, capable of fitting out a whole company of soldiers with uniforms, arms and ammunition. In the back room I was measured for my fighting-kit and initiated into the mysteries of the Männlicher carbine, the favorite weapon of the Macedonians, and the Nagonts seven-shooter, the auxiliary firearm carried by all *chetniks*.

Neither Mileff nor Popasoff had heard my boastful estimate of my military ability at the Restaurant Balkan dinner, so that they evinced only a mild surprise at my baffled attempts to master the mechanical details of the two weapons.

*District.

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II

BEFORE sunrise on a morning in early September Mileff and I set out for the railway station in Sofia, where we purchased tickets for T'Barzardjeck, a town midway on the line to Philippopolis. At T'Barzardjeck we were met by the Mayor, a good revolutionist, himself, who had been *on comita*, as they say in the Balkans, and were supplied with an equipage to convey us the rest of our journey toward Logina, the mountain town which was the Bulgarian headquarters of Mileff's *cheta*. To reach Logina we traversed the Pass of Abadana, a beautiful defile through one of the Rhodope ranges, over a highway that presented all the glowing colors of the East combined with the more subdued atmosphere of Western civilization.

We reached Logina about midnight, and were given an official welcome at the hands of the leading citizens. Indeed, when I was there, Logina was a nest of insurgent sympathizers, from the Mayor down to the youngest school-boy. It was the regular stopping-place for the *chetas* entering Macedonia by the "eastern canal." According to the original plans, we were to have started the following night, but the necessity of procuring a pack-horse for the spare ammunition and medical supplies and the revolutionary literature which the *cheta* was to disseminate through the villages obliged us to postpone our departure.

In the meantime we busied ourselves getting acquainted, sorting out the arms, which had been shipped from Sofia by express, and filling cartridge-clips and pouches. The *chetniks* who were to go with us, about a dozen in number, were a remarkably fit-looking body of men. There were Nicola, called the Courier, an immense bulk of a man, strong as an ox, and Andrea, both of them sub-chiefs; Kortser, a slim, sandy-haired man, with a waist like a girl's; Dodor, an irrepressible school-boy who was going on his first campaign; and Peter and Johnny, two quaint brigands who might have stepped from the chorus of an Offenbach operetta. Johnny possessed a Bulgarian name, but it was beyond comprehension, so we compromised on Johnny, with great mutual satisfaction. I told him it was a title of honor in America. The others I did not know so well, and their names have escaped me.

While we were in Logina I went about a great deal with Mileff, and among the places we visited was an apothecary's shop, where Mileff was handed a dozen little paper packets, each marked with a red cross. He noted my interest and smiled.

"Arsenic," he said. "In case the Turks get us. It is not good to be captured by the *askares!*"

I imagine I looked my disgust, for this was an eventuality I had not reckoned on. Mileff laughed at me, and thrust the packets into his pocket.

"Perhaps we will not need them," he remarked. "It is not nice, eh? Not pleasant? But it is better than to be tortured. You might forget your last shot and then what would you do without the arsenic, eh? It is best!"

Possibly it is. Indeed, after some of the miserable specimens of tortured humanity I saw in Macedonia, I am inclined to believe it is. But I was most awfully glad that I never had occasion to think seriously of using my cross-marked package.

That night we started and pushed for five or six hours through the mountains in the direction of the frontier, twenty miles away. During the day we rested at a lumber-camp, where we were given a hearty welcome by the men in charge, and at five o'clock in the afternoon took up our trail again. It would be impossible for me to exaggerate the difficulties of that trail followed in the moonlight, under the heavy load of arms—two hundred rounds of rifle and revolver ammunition, a knapsack and cloak. The close-fitting sandals of bull's-hide which we wore were necessary on the slippery rocks, of course, but they were no protection to my feet, used only to modern boots, and I suffered agonies of pain throughout the whole first week of our march.

That night we rested at a second lumber-camp, belonging to a man named Spass Arizonoff, who had been tortured by the Turkish *bashi-bazouks** after his family had been massacred. We were also met by a royal Bulgarian forester, who gave us details of the disposition of the Turkish troops along the frontier; but just as we were about to start, a pack-train of Pomaks, or Mohammedan Bulgars, wound out of the pass in the direction we were traveling and pitched camp on the opposite side of the stream that flowed in front of the lumber-

* Irregular soldiers.

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jack's hut. These Pomaks are hated by the Bulgarians worse than they hate the Turks, and the Pomaks reciprocate the feeling.

Consequently Mileff decided to wait until late in the evening before starting, so as to escape their observation. It was three o'clock in the morning when he moved down the line of recumbent figures and woke each man with a poke of his rifle. Without a sound we swung off the regular trail on to a little side-path and stole through the dimness of the spreading pine-forests that clothed the flanks of the mountains all about us. A half-hour's march from the frontier we halted again and rested until afternoon, keeping a sharp look-out to see that we were not observed by spies. But despite our precautions, we were seen by a party of Pomak smugglers who passed us on their way to Granitza, the frontier post. That was enough for Mileff. He decided that the quicker we got across the mythical line that spelled danger and safety, the better it would be. To wait would only give the Turkish commander time to throw out his troops and effectually close the approaches to every mountain-trail leading into the Macedonian Balkans.

AT FOUR o'clock Mileff and Nicola went out to reconnoiter. They found the coast clear, and we all started at five o'clock, rifles loaded and bayonets fixed. At the end of a half-hour's spurt we emerged upon a ridge and stared across a deep valley at a second ridge, beyond which stretched tier on tier of blue mountains. Nicola, who was leading the column, motioned with his hand for us to drop to the ground.

Mileff had taken out his field-glasses and was searching the horizon. Now he rose on one elbow and pointed over the tops of the pine-trees below us at the blue mountains beyond the valley.

"Macedonia," he said.

The trail we followed led steadily downward and it was several hours later when we emerged from a gloomy defile on to a bare mountain-flank, vague and spectral in the darkness. Mileff motioned for a halt, and we sat in a huddled group, sheltered by a boulder the size of a house. Suddenly, a violent desire to sneeze asserted itself and I threw back my head to indulge in it with childish satisfaction. "*Ker*——" the first part of it was just sounding, when a strong hand was clapped over my mouth and I looked up into Mileff's grinning face. He wagged his fore-finger solemnly and indicated that I should listen.

The night had seemed devoid of noise until then. But now a far-off clamoring struck my ear, the barking of dogs, a dim, confused shouting—the noise that many men make.

"*Ssh!*" urged Mileff. "Turk! Turk *askare!*"

Presently we started again, but ere we had gone a mile, all the time crouched nearly double to make our figures less distinct against the open ground about us, Nicola dropped to earth like a shot plover. As I sank beside him, a voice called in long, wailing tones, almost at my elbow, it seemed.

"*Eee—ee—ee—eee—e—ee!*" it shrilled mournfully, and then there came the clank of arms as a rifle was shifted from one arm to the other.

"Turk," Mileff breathed in my ear. "Turk sentinel. But there is no danger, if you are quiet. He is a hundred feet away. We must wait until the grand patrol passes. Then the Turks go to bed and we can march more safely."

To show his unconcern, the *voivode* carefully covered the breech of his rifle with a fold of his cloak and went to sleep. At first a trifle shocked by his callousness to danger, I soon found to my amazement that I had little difficulty in following him. I must have slept half an hour or more before I became conscious of a confused jumble of noises somewhere in the outside world. The howling of our neighbor, the sentinel, calling to let his comrade on the next beat know that he was still alive, had merged into an approaching chorus of howls, together with the din of clashing arms and marching men. Dogs barked on every side; bugles shrieked and there was a distant throbbing of drums. The *chetniks* were all awake and strung out in line, behind bushes and boulders. Mileff wormed his way over the grass to my side.

"It is the patrol," he whispered. "They will soon pass. There is little chance that they will see us, but it is well to be careful."

And he tapped his rifle significantly.

The strain upon one's nerves was anything but pleasant. The Turks appeared to take hours making up their minds to move on from one sentry-post to another, and in the interval they made the night hideous with their cries, which was probably one reason why they did not discover us.

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"*Heidi!*" murmured Mileff, as soon as their clamor had died away in the distance, and the *chetniks* fell into shadowy column behind him. We no longer marched; we flitted from bush to bush, from rock to rock. One by one, we cautiously crossed stretches of open savannah to dive into patches of woodland. Once we forded a stream, and several times we passed gaping ruins that had been farm-houses. At last we reached the base of the mountain-wall at whose top we might expect comparative safety. Suddenly, as we were climbing the trail on the upper slopes, a single rifle-shot rang out in the valley below. Simultaneously there came up to us the crashing of drums and a sputtering crackle of rifle-fire that persisted for a minute and then sank into a succession of individual reports.

It was too far off to have been caused by discovery of our presence, but we did not stop to think of this. We ran up the mountain-side until our panting lungs would permit us to run no farther. Then we rested a few moments, and pushed on, with weary, dragging feet. As we emerged on the summit the eastern sky was already beginning to pale with the first hint of the dawn; but there was no rest in store for us yet. On and on we pushed in the chilly air, across endless vistas of mountains and moors, shivering in our own sweat.

An hour after sunrise we stopped at the bottom of a little gully and went to sleep in our cloaks, without making any attempt to establish a guard. There was not a man among us who could have kept his eyes open any longer. The Mileff *cheta* was dead-beat. Afterward we had some marches that made that first one seem like child's-play, but I know of no other that I look back upon with such a mixture of pride and horror. Time and again, I thought I must certainly give up, but each time the primitive instinct of emulation came to my relief. I could keep on if the rest could, I told myself, and I kept on.

III

IT WAS very late the following night when we reached the first of the mountain villages which owned Mileff as their governor under the Committee—the Three, as they were called. This village was Kovatchavishta, and it was situated behind a second mountain range, about forty miles from the Bulgarian frontier. But it seemed that we were to have no rest, for before we had been twenty-four hours in the place the Council of Elders, composed of headmen from all the surrounding villages, made complaint to the *voivode* of the depredations of a small party of *bashi-bazouks* whose lair was in the village of Osikovo, not far from Kovatchavishta. These men had been levying tribute on all the Christian villagers about them and were threatening worse treatment to those who refused their demands.

The headman of Kovatchavishta, to which village the *bashi-bazouks* had recently made a visit, told Mileff that there were eight of them. He offered to lend us as many militia as we wanted if the *voivode* would undertake the task of wiping them out, and Mileff, after some consideration, agreed to undertake the job, provided he was given fifteen extra men.

"How soon can they be ready?" he asked.

"To-night," said the chief or headman, a stout graybeard of seventy. "You shall have the pick of our young men—anything, so long as you rid us of these pests who would make a desert of our village."

It was very dark when we slipped down the ladder-stairs into the courtyard that night. The small enclosure was packed with men in long cloaks, which were blown aside by the wind now and then, revealing glistening rifles and belts of serried cartridges. But they were all quiet. Not a word was spoken above a whisper, and the sandals made no noise on the cobbled paving.

I noticed that perfect comradeship prevailed. The *chetniks* readily made way for me, and the militiamen whispered among themselves, pointing at my smooth face—considered an affliction in Macedonia.

"*Americansky*," they muttered.

Mileff turned and introduced me to the chief of the militiamen, a big, lusty young fellow, who gripped my hand in his sinewy fingers. I suppose neither of us thought that that night was to be his last.

"We march at once," Mileff explained to me. "Until we reach Osikovo we shall keep together. At Osikovo we shall divide. Andrea, with ten men, will circle the village and come down from the hills in the rear. The rest of us will attack from the front."

He turned to the *chetniks*.

"*Heidi!*"

The man who had been our host, Gurgeff

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the smith, he was called, took down the bar that held the gate shut and we glided out into the village street, dim and indistinct under the moonless sky. The dogs had all been muzzled in anticipation of our departure and not a sound rose from the close-packed houses as we climbed the terraced hills that rose steeply on every side. Near the head of the trail we were challenged sharply by the militia patrol, who mounted secret guard, day and night, to ward against the coming of the *askares*.

Our guide gave the countersign and the patrol lowered their rifles and stood forth in the mirk while we passed. To each one of us they spoke a hasty word of greeting, and then they sank back into the oblivion of the rocks and we toiled on over a wide moor covered with long grass that concealed the hollows into which one's feet slipped unawares. Several times we halted for a few minutes, while the guide went ahead to reconnoiter. Again, on a couple of occasions it was necessary to make detours around villages. We had been marching for perhaps three hours when we came to a low stone wall, sure sign that a village lay just beyond.

Mileff called softly to the guide and held a brief consultation with the sub-chiefs, after which we proceeded more slowly. The hills began to shut in on either side, and in front of us they narrowed so as to become a defile. Mileff detached a couple of men on the flanks to act as scouts, and we cautiously approached the portals of the valley, marching over a rough wagon-road. Presently a roof loomed up in view in the distance. I leaped upon a boulder and, looking down the valley, saw a long succession of roofs sloping up the hillside to the right of the road. Dogs barked at intervals, but otherwise the silence was unbroken.

At a point opposite the center of the village we halted, and Andrea passed down the line, picking out ten men, whom he motioned to follow him. Without a word of farewell they marched off into the night, and the rest of us lay down behind the wall. For the first time I began to feel the strangeness of the situation. It was all so weird, so unreal, so vague with impending happenings that one could not foresee. I told myself that I was in the midst of some nightmare and would probably wake up in a few minutes to laugh at the specters that had been thronging through my brain.

BUT my own action served to convince me of the reality of the situation. Mechanically, I wondered what might be the time, and mechanically I reached into my pocket for my watch. As I was striving to make out the hands, Mileff leaned over me and flashed his electric pocket-lamp on the dial, with a grunt of inquiry. It was five minutes past midnight. The whisper was passed slowly down the line. Five minutes past midnight. I no longer doubted my surroundings. I knew it must be all real and that in a few minutes I should be in the midst of my first fight! Strange that I should have had no preliminary qualms, you say. Possibly, and yet the spell of the darkness and the mystery of the night had cast a lure of enchantment over me that forbade the commonplace sensations of my position. I could not have felt them had I wished.

For a long time, it seemed, nothing happened. Dogs barked infrequently—not at anything in particular, but just to make a noise. A wind sprang up that rustled the grass, and the leaves of the trees beside the road rattled drearily. Gradually, and without knowing it, I dropped off to sleep, even as I had the night we had waited at the frontier line for the Turkish patrol to pass. I could not have closed more than one eye, though, for almost at once I was awakened by the glare of Mileff's pocket-lamp, held inside his cloak. He was looking at his watch. I looked at mine. It was nearly one o'clock. We all rose to our feet and reslung our knapsacks. Still there was not a sound.

Only the trees across the way seemed to be moaning louder. Could the wind have so increased in force? Mileff drew a whistle from his pocket and blew gently on it. From right beside me came the low, whining note of the wind sighing through the tree-boughs. From beyond the trees and the village it was answered. I understood. Andrea and his men were signaling to us from the mountain-side above us. Mileff merely raised one hand and our line swung over the stone wall into the road. Bending double, the men ran across it to the wall that lined the opposite side, surmounted that, and broke through the orchard at a run. In five minutes we were speeding along the main street of Osikovo.

We dodged around a corner and pulled up in a square where three streets inter-

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sected. Houses were on all sides of us, but directly in front of us was a structure slightly larger than any of the others. Like all the others, it was massively built of stone throughout the first story, with a slate roof, and stood in a courtyard, of which it formed one of the sides. The gateway was high, broad and arched. The gate itself appeared to be substantially built of wooden beams, bolted together with iron. A huge iron lock fastened it to the side of the arch. So much I saw in the fleeting second of incertitude after our arrival.

Our line huddled in the shadows cast by the two other houses, and the guide stepped across the roadway to the gate. Lifting his carbine, he pounded vigorously for a minute upon the beams. In the stillness of the village the blows were as distinct as the reports of a Gatling. From the other side of the gate came a shuffling of feet, and a voice demanded hoarsely what the caller wanted.

"We are friends," answered the guide, his rifle at his shoulder. "We are Pomaks from Libyaho. Let us enter. We have passed *chetniks* in the hills."

He spoke hurriedly in the Turkish dialect. The *bashi-bazouk* in the yard seemed to hesitate. Breathlessly, we waited to see what would happen. There was a creaking noise, and a wicket, a hand's-breadth in size, swung open midway of the gate. Through it was stuck a rifle-barrel.

"Stand forth!" said the voice. "Stand forth, you and your friends, that I may see you."

"It is useless," breathed Mileff. "They are too suspicious. We will charge openly." He leaped to his feet. "Charge!" he cried, "Viva Macedonia!"

We bunched across the road at a run, firing our rifles at the gate. I had a glimpse of the guide shooting through the wicket at the *bashi-bazouk* warder, and the next thing I knew I was in a mass of pushing, shoving men, jabbing the tough wood with bayonets, hammering on it and even using their bare hands. Then Mileff's voice rose from the ruck.

"Stand back, stand back!" he called. "Fire at the lock! Aim at the lock, every man!"

Ten or a dozen rifles were concentrated on the lock, and in a trice it was blown to atoms, the gate swinging slightly ajar. For a second we paused, hesitating; but some one set up a ragged cheer, and we ran across the yard toward a doorway that showed in the irregular wall of the house, while a spattering fire issued from a line of windows in the second story. The *chetniks* fired back, crouching behind whatever cover was available. I saw one man put a bullet into a bullock and use its carcass as a shield.

IN THE meantime the fight was going rather against us. One of the militiamen crawled out of the gateway, dragging a limp leg after him, and we could not see that our fire was making any impression. Quick to see the need for some new action, Mileff seized a huge balk of timber and, with Nicola and a couple of others, backed off a pace or two. Taking a short run, they brought it against the door with a mighty swing. Again and again they battered it, and with every swing the door tottered more helplessly We saw that it must come down.

But where were Andrea and his men? We needed them badly at this time.

Even as the door fell inward, a cheer, the pattering of sandal-shod feet on the road outside, and the renewal of firing by the *bashi-bazouks* overhead, heralded the approach of the sub-chief's squad. This was our chance. Not a man waited for orders. They sprang simultaneously at the steep stairs, hardly more than a ladder, that led up to the second floor. It did not seem as if anything could stop them; but fortunately a couple of the more cautious ones, including myself, crowded out in the intensity of the first stampede, waited behind, pumping lead up through the trap-door over the heads of the leaders. It was lucky for the hotheads that we stayed back.

The first man through the trap was the young chief of the militiamen. A revolver cracked, and as Mileff, behind him, reached the trap, the man's body fell backward, sweeping his comrades from the stairs as effectually as a broom. The head of a *bashi-bazouk* showed for an instant, but Kortser took aim from the hip, and the Turk came down on top of the pile of *chetniks*. It was a mess, indeed.

Outside, Andrea's men were occupying the attention of the *bashi-bazouks* by a steady fire at the windows, and the couple of us who had stayed below fired up the stairs as fast as we could work the ejectors. Our fire stopped the first rush, and the

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scanty numbers of the *bashi-bazouks* did not allow them to take full advantage of the situation, so that by the time Mileff had leaped from under the pile of *chetniks* at the stair-foot a semblance of order had been restored. I don't know how it happened, but somebody had set fire to the pent-houses along the courtyard walls that did duty for stables, and they were blazing vividly. Frightened sheep, cattle, goats and horses ran about the yard, and the corpse of the *bashi-bazouk* warder lay in a twisted heap by the gate, not far from a *chetnik* whose body was simply drilled with bullet-holes.

"This is no use!" Mileff shouted in my ear. His face was black with powder, and his beard, partly singed off, was flecked with blood. "We must retire!"

He beckoned to the other men, and crouching close to the ground, we ran across the courtyard in the blinding glare of the flames that tossed back and forth, filling the yard with conflicting lights and shadows that made good shooting impossible. Beyond the gates we halted, and the men dropped exhausted. Mileff called for a list of casualties. We had lost two men killed and two wounded. So far as we knew, two of the enemy were dead.

"There must be no more of this!" said Mileff decisively. "I can not afford to waste good men on a nest of rats. They must be smoked out."

He explained his plan. Andrea's men, as the freshest, were to make a dash with faggots of inflammable materials into the lower part of the house, while the rest of us covered them with our fire. After that it would only be necessary to shoot any Turks who tried to escape.

Without any superfluous talk, the sub-chiefs ran to their detachments and told off men for the work. Andrea's party broke into nearby yards and seized all the firewood, hay and straw they could find. One man discovered a large can of oil, which was received with savage joy. Finally, when everything was ready, our desultory fire was stopped completely.

There sounded the sighing murmur of the *voivode's* whistle, and Andrea's squad ran forward into the yard, while the remainder of us kept a steady stream of lead pouring into the second-story windows. The *bashi-bazouks* managed to fire back at us, but they were given no time to aim, and Andrea's squad reached the doorway in safety. As each man threw down his load he doubled back across the yard, out of the gate, where Mileff and I were huddled in the shelter of the posts. Andrea was the last to leave. He emptied the oil over the pile of faggots that bulged from the doorway and stuck the lighted torch he carried into the mass. Then he, too, ran for the gate. A burst of cheering greeted him from the *chetniks'* line, and, as if in a frenzy of despair, the *bashi-bazouks* redoubled their fire, the flame from their long-barreled Mausers squirting from the windows in never-ceasing streams.

DIT MAY seem a monstrous thing, this roasting alive of half a dozen men. Yet war is war, and while I make no apologies for it, that is a fact for which there is no rebuttal. War is iniquitous, horrible, inhuman, ghastly, disgusting. Granted, all these. No man who has experienced it will deny the assertion. A certain fascination, it has. That, also, can not be denied. The crackle and whine of rifle-fire, the shrilling of shell or shrapnel, the splendid picture of a line of charging men—these things make the blood tingle at the time and intoxicate the spirit. But when the spectacle is finished a bad taste remains. General Sherman was right. War is hell, and it brutalizes those who participate in it, inevitably, with the rigid precision of a cosmic fact.

The flames gained rapidly in the hold of the *bashi-bazouks*. They leaped to the stables that had escaped the first blaze and licked them up, mounting the outer walls of the house, and gaining footholds through the windows. It was not many minutes before the whole building was a single vast pillar of flames that towered to the sky, making the village and the hills surrounding it loom blackly against the unnatural glare. And from this house of flames came a shrill screaming such as words can not hope to describe, and such as, once heard, it is beyond the power of man to forget. I hear them sometimes in my dreams, those piercing falsetto shrieks of utter despair; and each time I hear them over again I wake up shivering in a cold sweat, afraid to sleep for the rest of the night.

The *chetniks* leaned sternly on their rifles, watching the conflagration take its course, and the villagers, by this time certain of our identity, stole forth from their homes

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to look on the destruction of their oppressors. In little knots they thronged the housetops and the streets, watching the flames that swirled and roared, the women hugging their children to their breasts, and the men staring with a fixed concentration.

As the front wall of the house fell in amid a shower of coals, Mileff's signal blew, and the *chetniks* hastened to him from their positions in the rough circle they had cast about the place to prevent the possible escape of any of its inmates. Several had bandaged arms or heads. One was carried by a couple of comrades on a rude litter. As silently as they had come, they formed their line and departed through the dust of the road, the people who lined the way looking at them with curious, drawn faces. A baby cried drearily because it was tired, and a second wall fell in the house that had become the tomb of the *bashi-bazouks*. On a crest the *cheta* halted for a minute, and I looked back at Osivoko, still showing red in the fire-glare and dotted with the groups of wonderstruck peasants. In the east a beam of rosy light shot over the dark wall of the pines.

Mileff muttered "*Heidi!*" to the weary men who stumbled after him.

We knew that the din of the rifle-fire must have reached hostile ears long ere this, and already the *askare* patrols would be swinging their wide circle in an effort to meet us before we could reach safety. Flight, steady, unrelenting flight, was our only chance, and we were very tired. It seemed to me that my head would burst, and each foot seemed to be weighted down with leaden cannon-balls.

(*Mr. Smith's further adventures will appear in the next number.*)

A MAN

by George Holmes Cushing*

AS Captain Dick Newgate's ship *Golden Gate* cast loose her shore hawsers at Two Harbors, one of those western blizzards came whistling down from Medicine Hat.

As that storm chased Captain Dick into Cleveland harbor, Winter settled—in that year of 1906—over the whole northern section of the country. The following morning, the few wires that were still clinging to ice-encrusted poles were flashing the news that the farmers of the Dakotas and Canada were snowed in and were freezing. One instrument clicked off this plea for help from the head of the lakes:

Worst blizzard years. Coal already scarce. Can possibly rush two more cargoes? Tugs keep harbor here open five days. Same Soo. Dollar freight.

*See page 380.

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This message was first read and then contemplatively twisted about the heavy fingers of Captain Al Minnot. That gentleman in his rotund person embraced the manifold, yet easy-resting duties of ship's husband, of charterer or broker, and of something a little more than head bookkeeper. In fact, his labor rested so lightly upon him that he not infrequently carried it with him to an armed chair on rockers and sat down complacently with his well-behaved worries frolicking at his feet.

Aforetime, he had been one of these quiet, bewhiskered Lake captains and, as such, was the embodiment of taciturn authority, which, be it said, he carried modestly. Quitting the sea and coming ashore, he shaved off his battered beard, speedily grew stout from over-resting and tried to become jovial in a somnolent and heavy fashion. Having had, for years, no more weighty problems to decide than whether he would consent to carry a cargo at a profitable rate of freight—with the insurance company assuming all risk on hull and cargo—he was unprepared for the mental rigors incidental to a decision which had to weigh the risk of hull and cargo over and against six times the ordinary profit of a trip.

The uncertain rolling of that message around his fingers told of the creaking strain upon his almost untried mental equipment. As a master of another's vessel he would have scoffed at the idea of any extraordinary danger arising from the fact that the buoys were out of the rivers, that the first ice was forming in St. Mary's River and that Government lighthouses were already dark for the Winter.

Now he was clothed with authority, and any bad judgment would delay or even prevent the arrival of the day when he would appear in that enviable rôle—the owner of a boat or even of a fleet. This latter consideration had all but killed his fighting instinct and had about reduced him to an undecided lump staring at a big stake for which he dared not play when he almost involuntarily reversed his better judgment.

The telegram had completed its hundredth wavering trip around his fingers when Captain Dick, whose ship was a unit of the fleet, entered with the bruskness of a draft of December air.

"The tugs got me off that mud-bank at midnight," he announced. "Any more orders, or shall I put that crew of blessed ruffians on the dock until next Spring?"

Being forced to appear in public with samples of Captain Dick's vocabulary, I am embarrassed. I can not imagine his transacting business without it, yet it is not what might be called parade uniform. This puts me under necessity to brush it up and to make it appear as respectable as possible. Leaving it to the gentlemen to imagine the smudge spats where my brush leaves a suggestion of stain, I shall proceed. While I have been interrupting, Captain Al is already answering.

"I haven't decided, Dick," he said. "Duluth wants two cargoes and offers to pay a dollar a ton and in addition to keep the channels open. But I don't know what I'll do; the lights have all been taken in, you know."

"Got any coal?"

"Two cargoes; one here and one at Lorain."

"Then meander off into eternal midnight with your lights! I'm going to Duluth!"

"Not so fast, Dick. The insurance has expired and the extra profit won't pay for any lost boats!"

"Wrap that sort of language in cotton and stow it away in the safe; you'll need it when you grow old. As for me, I have a son of a coward for assistant chief engineer and if I don't hold his nose into it through another trip this season, his inborn timidity will grow rank this Winter and like as not he'll call a strike next Spring, so he may stay in port until the storms are over. I'm goin' to Duluth, I tell you!"

"That is only half of it, Dick. Two boats have to go and—this is a mean storm; I don't like to ask any of the boys to go out."

"You don't have to. Go yourself! I knew the time when you could sail a ship through the lava of —— without scorching the paint. And as for upending a 'decky,' there wasn't a defter fist on the lakes. Come along, Al, and we'll tie up in Duluth by Sunday morning."

THE long years of that isolation which comes only to a master at sea—he sees, hears and thinks, but never communicates—had robbed the face of Captain Al of its transparency. At this moment gales of enthusiasm to try conclusions once more with the elements may

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have been sweeping his very soul, but there was not even a corresponding ripple upon his countenance. He took refuge in the sailorman's prerogative of silence and waddled out of the room.

Captain Dick, tempestuous in all things, was at odds with all noncommittal methods. What he wanted was an instantaneous reply to his impetuous suggestion, and, failing to get it, he passed judgment with utmost freedom. He fairly shouted after the retreating figure,

"You've lost your nerve! You build steel ships for others to sail and don't dare put your own foot on the bridges of one of them! You have turned house-cat; in a gale of wind you'd shiver yourself to death!"

In that outburst, as every man who sails on any water knows, the dapper master broke through all barriers that surround circumspection and planted both feet firmly on dangerous ground. He had charged a seasoned follower of the seas with cowardice, and the retort was sure to be forceful. Had the accusation been made on board, we knew with reasonable accuracy what the reply would be; we who looked on could even, with the mind's eye, measure the blood spot on the deck. Under the changed conditions, only Captain Al knew what the reply would be and, with an uncommunicative face turned for an instant toward his accuser, he closed the door and was alone in his private office.

As for Captain Dick, having reached the exploding point, he whirled about impotently in the now vacant room as though in search of something, but preferably somebody, upon whom he could vent his wrath. There being neither deckhand nor fireman in reach, he dashed out of the door. As he did so, he careened and almost capsized a rough-looking, one-eyed man who was upon the point of entering. The latter righted himself and went about his business while Captain Dick went scurrying down the long hallway. Inside the office the one-eyed man encountered the rotund figure of the shore Captain emerging from the inner office.

"Hello, Willie," said the latter. "Meet Dick as you came in? A squall struck him amidship a minute ago and I was afraid he was going to spill his cargo. Guess he's got his keel level by now. I say, Willie. How would you like to go matin' on a little run to Duluth?"

The big ruffian—an amphibious brute who was known only as "Pig-Iron Bill"—grinned and pawed his misshapen face with a hand which left smudge spots wherever it touched. His one semblance of fear was of the police; his one concern was for beer-money—food and clothing being expected to care for themselves—and his one saving grace was that he executed any and all orders instantly without regard to their character or consequences.

"What's your ship and who's the skipper, Cap'n?"

"The *McKinney*, and I'm thinking some of sailin' her myself."

"Any bonus?"

"Pay and a half if you get through; nuthin' if you're drowned."

"I've got my dunnage with me."

Mr. "Pig-Iron Bill" was thus quaintly proffered, and thus crudely accepted the berth as mate on the steel propeller *McKinney* for a post-season trip from Cleveland to Duluth.

II

ON THE second evening after this episode the two ships came, within the identical hour, to the Limekiln Crossing and, finding that the wind out of the north had lowered the water, cast anchor and awaited a shift of the wind that might remove the obstruction and permit them to proceed.

Captain Dick, made amiable by a good dinner and the lapse of time, was on the point of ordering himself rowed over for a smoke with his old sailing mate. Taking his glass from the rack, he looked across the water to determine, if he could, whether his unusual visit might be unwelcome. While thus at long range taking a turn of the deck, he saw something which caused him to grunt with disgust, return the glass to its place and abandon his amiable intention. The *McKinney*, despite her powerful engines stowed away in the after quarter, clung to all sea traditions by sprouting a pair of naked steel spars from her unyielding steel decks. Since he had last seen her, not two days before, the foremast had been rigged out with a steel boom and a square sail, from which rigging ran aloft. With a sneer he snapped, as if to the singing wind,

"What in thunder are you doing with that antediluvian rag aboard?"

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The question, to his amazement, was answered almost at his side by the one-eyed mate, who, approaching unnoticed and scorning to call for a rope, was coming aboard by way of the fender strake.

"He's goin' to use it on Lake Huron; says it makes her kind in a seaway and we can't afford, with freight at a dollar and no insurance, to spring a leak from overstrainin'."

The mimicry in the mate's intonation was perfect, and appeased the Captain for the loss of a visit. Now that an inferior officer was present, he controlled his tongue, reserving his confidences for the passing wind or for the seclusion of his cabin. The next instant he changed his mind. The mate delivered the message which had brought him:

"The master says, Cap'n Dick, as how we're in for a rough trip and each must stand by to help the other; neither is to lose sight of the other until we pass Whitefish Point."

To this man, who for twenty-five years had sailed those seas untrammeled, the idea of sailing in leash was the equal of lashing a keen hunter to a mongrel cur. The militant animal within him leaped to the surface and brought an explosive utterance to his lips, in which he lied with graceful fluency.

"Bill," he said, "you've shipped with a corpse. The man that once sailed these seas has been devoured by that rocking chair of his; the only thing left is a shell and it's fat and cowardly. Now he wants me to stand by and help him if he blunders into a mishap. He was afraid to come, but didn't dare refuse. Now that he's outside the breakwater, he trembles every time she rolls. The 'old man' thought it might happen, but said I could rely on you. From this minute, I'm in command. I take the lead and you are to follow. If he tries to interfere, lock him in his stateroom. If he makes a fuss, put him to sleep. We are due in Duluth Sunday morning and I'm going to see that we get there!"

With a new sense of authority which almost metamorphosed the beast into a man, the one-eyed mate went over the side and soon, with uncanny, animal dexterity, scaled the forbidding and tossing sides of his own ship, swung the longboat aboard unaided and, casting furtive eyes fore and aft, went below without reporting.

Captain Al, who had seen it all and suspected the meaning of it, smiled quietly and turned in. He was without weapons, a fact which had never troubled him less than now.

Lake Huron describes a long arc of a circle between Port Huron and Mackinac. One-third the trip out from Port Huron and the navigator sees the jaws of Saginaw Bay open on his port quarter with the lights of Tawas City to warn him he is passing "the graveyard of ships." Here the course begins to bend to the westward. An equal distance on his new tack and the mouth of Georgian Bay with its thousand hidden teeth of rock yawns over his starboard bow. To steer a course, in a storm, between these twin dangers in a narrow sea is a delicate task, even with lights and buoys always within the range of the glass. To make the trip with the lights gone and the air snow-clouded is to enroll death as a member of one's crew and to hope he may not prove mutinous.

On this occasion, Captain Al had turned out at five to find his ship under way and well up the Detroit river. Before noon he had made Port Huron and was scanning the dock line for the *Golden Gate*, which he knew had preceded him, and which he hoped, but hardly expected, he would find awaiting him. While he was taking a sailor's inventory of the weather and was noting that she was blowing a whole gale out of north by east, his mate came up, toying with a belaying-pin which he carried with studied indifference. The Captain looked at him with an indulgent smile.

"We've got none too many of them sticks, Willie. You'd better put it back where you found it. We'll need it in a few hours!"

"Are y' goin' out in that, Cap'n?"

"Nuthin' else to do, Willie. Dick's gone and as I gave the orders to hang together, I guess I've got to do the hangin'."

The mate muttered something which could have been instantly translated upon any English-speaking dock in Christendom, but which, if reproduced here, would of necessity be so disguised as to be a stranger on board any ship. It is enough to say that, in his opinion, some one had erred grievously in classing Captain Al as a coward.

Before nightfall he was sure of it. Shortly before four in the afternoon this same mate rapped at the Master's quarters to say that the wheelsman thought he had "picked up"

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the Tawas City light and was sure he had distinctly heard the fog whistle. He himself had seen the light but it acted peculiarly, and he too had heard the fog whistle. What bothered him was why a Government light should be burning that early even of a December afternoon and, unless they were dangerously close in shore, how could they make it out in such a storm? Both wheelsman and mate feared they had missed their course, and would the Captain set them straight?

For answer the Master, through his cabin window, scanned the clouds and then remarked quietly, "Put her dead on that light and hold her there. And, Willie, tell the engineer to give her some more speed if he has any. I'll be out in a minute."

NO SOONER did the big ship begin to swing in a broad circle, indicating a change of course, than the rotund Captain appeared upon the bridge. The mate, staggering under unbecoming qualms of uneasiness, suggested nervously,

"Cap'n Al, don't you think it would be better to keep off more? We don't see that light this clear even in fair weather. Hadn't we better stand off?"

"Willie, my boy, you've missed your reckonin' this time. Navigation's closed and the Tawas light'll not flash to-night. For the same reason, the fog horn's now blowin'. And, furthermore, you don't find any reflection of Uncle Sammie's signals on the clouds like that you see up yonder. Also, harbor lights don't smoke like that. From the sound of that whistle and the other things, I take it that Dick's preparin' to end his career with a bonfire, and we've got to go in and see what final message he wants to send the folks at home."

The rough mate jumped to the telephone and screamed a cursing message to the chief engineer and then stamped heavily upon the floor over the wheel-house and expressed volubly his opinion of any man who could not hold a ship in her course. In this monologue he made use of language which I shall not attempt to repeat. When he had thus given vent to his excitement, in a manner quite orthodox among seagoing men, the Master laid his hand tenderly upon his shoulder and suggested,

"Them orders is proper, Willie, but this is not exactly the time to get excited. Ca'm yourself an' save your strength. Meanwhiles you kin have them 'deckies' get out the life-preservers and put 'em alongside the rails. There's a jug of whisky in my locker; get that out, but leave it alone! Get the whole crew out but a fireman and two engineers. Then you tell 'em what to do an' look out for any as might be in the water. I've a notion to do a little wheelin' myself soon, an' I can't be with you. Keep ca'm, Willie; don't let the boys see an officer of this ship git excited; it's ru'nous on dis-cip-line!"

With an ejaculation which annihilated the Third Commandment, the one-eyed mate grabbed the nearest club and went aft to "inspire" the members of that crew to deeds of bravery. Left alone on the bridge, Captain Al surveyed the scene.

The wind had not shifted a point all day, but was increasing in velocity. Before it came racing the snow in such clouds as to leave a depressing sense of fullness in the air. Out of the north also came the tumbling waters; wave after wave raced past and tossed the ship, stirring the imagination to believe that some monster hidden among the submerged pinnacles of the northern bay was stampeding the water and causing it to rush wildly southward to fill the jaws of Saginaw Bay, submerge Bay City and overflow the whole of middle Michigan. It struck the slanting shores of Tawas City and poured into the bay. It split upon the end of the stubby peninsula to the east and part of it piled into the bay. The deflected waters from right and left and the headlong rush of unimpeded water drove into that shallow channel where, piling upon the backwash, it became an angry mass, moving furiously without the rhythm or direction of the open sea.

In the center of this tempest the *Golden Gate* was wallowing and burning. As the *McKinney* came into range, the light of the December day was almost gone, but the leaping flames from the after portion of the *Gate* threw the deck into bold relief. Along the starboard and port rails, the members of the crew were drawn up in military formation with the life-boats ready to launch into those impossible waters. At his post on the bridge stood Captain Dick, erect and commanding, revolver in hand, prepared to shoot down the first man to start a stampede.

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III

IT WAS a sight to arouse the slumbering stories of the Vikings and of all the courageous who have walked the paths of tragedy and passed on gloriously. With the first odor of smoke in his nostrils, Captain Al knew the time for action had come.

"Willie's got some work aft for you, son," he said to the wheelsman. "Run along now and don't lose your head; because if you do I'll kick your ribs in!"

Alone at the wheel, he tumbled his hat into the corner, stripped off his oilskins and, a militant figure in a sweater, undertook the world-old battle between man and the elements. Pitted against the thundering sea, the screaming wind and the driving snow, was just one thin-skinned ship which leaped so lightly that she seemed the plaything of their passion.

Feeling compassion for the ship, I turn to what seems an insignificant man at the wheel. His eye as keen as that of an eagle and his hand as steady as the vibrations of a great pendulum are the salvation of those beleaguered men if there is any help for them this side of heaven. He rode her in a sweeping circle down the wind, and began to creep up from astern. He eased her through the smoke-belt that trailed the burning ship, headed her a point or two off the wind and steered her on a long slant across the *Golden Gate's* uneasy bow.

"Now, old girl, behave yourself and we'll have those boys aboard in a jiffy. Easy, sister, easy; don't strike; rub her friendly-like; that starts right!"

Talking calmly to his bounding ship while twenty-three brave and cool men marveled at his daring maneuver, the man who had been classed a coward went cheerfully in where Davy Jones' Locker stood wide open to receive them all.

"Slow her down, chief!" he signaled the engineer.

A huge wave broke against her bow and the great vessel shuddered, seemed to stop, and then glided forward with the grace and cunning of some powerful animal stealthily stalking its prey.

"Ah! That's right, old lady. We missed ramming her by a foot."

His bow had indeed barely missed and came so near to striking that instantly his bulging port quarter was rubbing itself against the pointed nose of the *Golden Gate.*

"Shut her off now, chief! Let her ride!"

Captain Al "paid her off" a point to starboard and let the port rail of his ship scrape the plunging nose of the burning vessel.

"She likes the smell of us; she can't get her nose away. That's right, my lads, come aboard! You're all welcome. Full steam ahead, now, chief! We're clear of her!"

With one hand resting upon the wheel, Captain Al looked aft toward the burning ship. Erect on the bridge was Captain Dick, while, on the deck, the autocratic discipline maintained to the tragic end, the mate was saluting to report that all the other members of the crew had been saved. At that point, the one-eyed mate lurched into the *McKinney's* wheel-house looking, breathing and sputtering interrogations. The purport of his overburden of question was what to do for the two left behind.

"I thought I told you not to get excited, Willie!" The Master gave a savage turn to the wheel to right the ship following a broadside from the sea.

"We're goin' back after them boys, Willie, but we've got to turn around first. And, Willie, this next one is a different job. We ain't got time to sneak up from the stern like we did. We've got to take her nose to nose. Since the two of us may go down if this tub don't follow her rudder, I'd feel a little easier if we went down there under that sail; she won't roll so easily when the wind's tuggin' at her aloft. As I bring her around, you set that sail with a couple of reefs in it."

The mate, not comprehending that trick in seamanship which this Master of all Masters had in his mind, scratched his head and started away. The Master, keeping up a rhythmic motion at the wheel, shot his alert body half through the door to issue a final injunction.

"I say, Willie, hang on to it like death, until I give you the word and then cast everything away, quick! I'll take care of the rest of it."

When they first sighted the burning ship the short December afternoon was almost ended. In that half light, the water was a dirty, slate gray; the clouds above were black, underlined with dingy sulphur; and between sea and sky the air swam with a

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smoky mist to leeward and with crystal-white snow up into the wind.

Now the night had fallen without relief. The black waters leaped out of nothing a cable's distance away. The wind and the snow sprang from nowhere; a dozen yards in any direction and everything material ceased to be. The great ship seemed to roll and toss upon the crest of some disturbed substance which, by a devilish twist of natural laws, had reared itself into a peak out of some great chasm. Only now and then did the veil of smoke lift itself from the burning ship to silhouette the jeopardized seamen against that awful bank of blackness that was everywhere. To grope one's way in that midnight and on such a sea to some swaying, delicate point was no task for a man with thoughts bent upon the sweetness of life.

"You may shut her down, chief; I'll slide into this under my strip of canvas. When I give you the signal, reverse her at full speed. A half minute will do; then shut her off again." The Master was talking calmly over the telephone.

THE two ships crept closer together each second. One ran deliberately down the wind, a gale screaming through her scanty rigging; the other, an uncontrollable hulk, pointed her nose into the eye of the wind and rolled clumsily. The *McKinney's* bow crept past that of the *Golden Gate.* They had not struck, but, it seemed, neither had Captain Al made his point; between them was a yawning gap, through which a tug might have run with safety.

"He's missed it! He's missed it!" shouted the mate with that agony of voice that can find expression in such a throat only in a ringing oath.

Out of the wheel-house, at the same instant, came a voice that challenged the raging storm.

"On the rail, Dick! On the rail! Jump when we strike or God help you!"

The prow of the *McKinney* was abreast of the pilot-house of the *Golden Gate.*

"Cast her away, Willie! Spill the wind out of her. Let go!" The voice of the Master had risen to an incisive roar.

"Reverse her, chief! Let her have it! That's it!"

Freed from the impetus of the sail, tugged at astern by the giant propellers and yielding to the glancing pressure of wind and sea, the *McKinney* took a sheer, leaping to port with the frightened, quivering impetuousness of a spirited horse shying at a flying leaf. When beam-ends struck beam-ends, a shower of sparks flashed an instant above the smoking cargo, a tongue of flame made the heavy air phosphorescent and, in the brief illumination, two men were seen to shoot through the air and sprawl, face downward, upon the steel deck of the *McKinney.*

"Full steam ahead, again, chief; we're out of it now!" The tranquil Captain was again using the signals, accompanying the manual action with the spoken word of command.

There are some things which I prefer not to describe. One of them is a strong, genuine, impetuous man confessing a mistake in judgment. For that reason, I will ask you to stand aloof with me among the shivering awe-struck crew while the rescued Captain goes forward to the little wheel-house and relieves his soul.

As we stand waiting, Captain Al's head and shoulder are shot through the door and he shouts,

"Willie, you forgot that drink I told you to give the boys! Bring that jug here; the Captain needs a bracer!"

This simple and time-honored solution of an embarrassing situation does not seem to suffice entirely, for, a moment later we hear the same voice in the same tone shouting,

"Fergit it, Dick, fergit it! 'Tain't nuthin'."

AS AN addenda which perhaps is superfluous, I might say that so far as the hero was concerned, the incident was forever thereafter stowed away and battened down in that taciturnity which is of the seas as it is nowhere else. When Congress wanted to recognize his bravery by a medal he wrote a laconic note to his Congressman, saying,

"Don't know what I'll do with it after I get it. If you can't help doing it, don't tell the newspaper boys."

That was the only reply that Captain Alonzo Minnot ever made to the charge of cowardice. In a world of odd retorts it stands to-day as a classic.

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SEN ASKEW'S $10,000 RIDE

by G·W·Ogden

FRED HOADLEY was bragging about a drive of sixty-five miles that he had made the day before with his team of strawberry roans.

"Yes, that's purty good for Kansas," said Everett, the fiddler, "where the air's so heavy an' the attitood's so low."

"Purty good!" sniffed Hoadley. "I tell you it's the record! It ain't never been beat!"

"Wouldn't risk no money on a claim like that, young feller," cautioned old Sen Askew, blinking up from the cushion he had made for his chin by crossing his hands on the back of his chair. "I wouldn't go slingin' no cash around to back up no sich a claim as that."

"You know anybody 'at ever done better?" sneered Hoadley.

"Better ain't a big enough word to tell the diff'rence, young feller," said Sen. "I know a man 'at beat it so fur you couldn't see the smoke of it. I know a man 'at rode clean acrost this here dad-blame State of Kansas, from the west end to the east, in four days, an' he done it on one dad-blasted old mule an' he didn't set around no stores blowin' about it, neither!"

"Well, if you don't mind, Sen," said Bucklestuck, the storekeeper, "we'd like for you to tell us who that wind-splittin' feller was, where he come from and where he went to."

"Where he come from ain't none of your dang business, but he went to one of the onriest settlements, among the onriest, windiest set of people, in this here State. He's right here and I'm the feller! No, I ain't goin' to tell you nothin'. You fellers is too scientifical for me, talkin' about your attitoods and so on. Attitood, huh! It ain't attitood, Everett, it's altiechewed and I don't reckon you ever seen any of it in your life. Huh, I been where the altiechewed's so dang high you couldn't keep your britches legs in your boots—they'd run up like quicksilver in a the'mom'ter. When I was in the Black Hills the fellers used to say about Calamity Jane——"

"You've told us about that before," interposed Bucklestuck, coming from behind the counter with a handful of Sweet Dreams cigars. "Here, light up, old feller, and tell us that there mule yarn."

"Ain't no yarn!" snarled Sen. "It's the facts in black an' white and I can show you a Leavenswuth paper with a piece in it as long's m' arm, that they wrote up about me the day after I come in. But I ain't agoin' to tell you fellers nothin'. You're too dang deep for me. 'Attitood,' snakes!"

Sen was not a resentful man, nor crabbed by nature. He was wakefully aware that the age had outrun him and he grew pettish sometimes holding his sides in his panting

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effort to keep from losing sight of even the tail-end of the parade.

But the Sweet Dreams were prolific, if not exactly aromatic, smoke-makers and soon old Sen saw his neighbors' faces dimly and veiled in haze, like the past which his memory was reviewing. Presently he squared his chair around against the wall, leaned back smiling and told his story.

THAT was a good while ago. To git down to it adzackly, it was in '52. My brother Al he was wagon boss for Rogers Brothers, of Leavenswuth and Santa Fé, and I was guide under him. We had twenty wagons, ten mules to the wagon. We was makin' the trip back home with a lot of Mexican stuff—hides and such truck, and feelin' our oats, too, for it was good weather, late in the Fall, and the last trip of the season.

Well, we'd dusted the alkeylie of New Mexico and Colorado out of our hides and struck Kansas that afternoon. I picked camp at the stage-station 'count of the water and grass and we was gittin' ready to turn in for the night when the stage from Santa Fé drove up.

The stage, you know, made a heap faster time 'n we did, one a week goin' each way, meetin' and passin' us, and the one that I'm talkin' about had left Santa Fé weeks and weeks after us. Well, of course, us fellers we moseyed over to the station while they was changin' horses and the passengers was eatin' and the first feller we run into was a young buck that clerked in Rogers Brothers' store at Santa Fé. He took us off to one side and he says to Al, "Been a-lookin' for you for a week past and I was just a-startin' over to your wagons. Got news from headquarters for you. The firm's gone to smash!"

Al he didn't believe it, but the young feller he stuck to his story as earnest as could be, drawin' us secret and confidential away from the others so they couldn't hear. "Well, great grabs!" says Al, "I thought Rogers Brothers was as solid as the United States!"

"Same with everybody," says the young feller, "but they're smashed as flat as a pancake. When I left Santa Fé their creditors there had tied up everything, and that fat feller you seen git out of the stage is bound for Leavenswuth to levy on whatever money and goods they've got there and snap up the teams and wagons in this train the minute you git in.

"Abe Rogers come to me an hour before the stage started and told me to go on with it and overtake you. He'd already paid my way to Leavenswuth. He told me about the inside of the trouble and he give me this here letter to hand to you, or to leave so's you'd git it if I happened to pass you in the night. Abe said it had some information about money comin' to you and the men. Said he wanted to see you fellers git your pay without havin' to wait the end of the raft of suits that'd more'n likely foller.

"Skullduggery was at the bottom of this here trouble, I tell you! Give them there Rogers boys room to cramp their wheels and turn and they'll git into the main road ag'in in short order. I'll put money up on that!"

WELL, that was so—never was no squarer fellers than them Rogers boys. But shucks! We was as bad as anybody else about our money. We wanted it, and we was a-goin' to git it, too! They'd give Al a check for $10,000 to cash at the bank when we got to Leavenswuth and pay off all hands. Some of the boys had as much as $500 comin' and I was one of the bunch.

"Well, your check won't be wuth ten cents," says the feller, "if you don't git it to the bank before that fat man gits to Leavenswuth and starts his game. I don't know how you're goin' to do it, but you got to beat him there to save your own necks!"

It was between me and Al which was to go on with that check and it didn't take us long to decide that I was the one to make the splurge, win or lose. First place, I knowed every foot of land, every crick, water-hole, cut-off and buffalo-waller from there to Leavenswuth; and next place, Al he couldn't very well leave the train.

Them days I had a mule I called Ellick, a slab-sided, wall-eyed, mean-lookin' varmint, but as gentle as a polecat and I'd rode him five times between Leavenswuth and Santa Fé. He was a goer and could stand it without water as long as a sheep. I rode over ninety mile on him at one stretch, without ever hittin' the ground, one time goin' for the soldiers when a pack of Comanches got after our train, and he come out of it as bright as a new flannel shirt.

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But of course something over four hundred mile was different, quite a passel different, as any of you fellers can figger out for yourselves some day when you got time.

Well, I chucked Al's pocketbook, with that check inside of it, in m' pocket, throwed some grub for myself and some feed for old Ellick into a sack and racked out, quicker'n it takes me to tell you.

Al he says to me when I swung on to old Ellick's back, "You got twenty minutes start of the stage and I reckon you'll need it before you git to Leavenswuth, boy. Good luck to you! Good-by!"

Shucks! Al he never thought I'd make it, I could see by the way he talked. And he didn't think he'd ever see me on this side of Jurden agin, neither. It didn't look so very hopeful. Them Comanches was mean about then and they was just the kind of fellers to hop on to a lone man any time. Every fifteen mile, when water was handy, there was a stage-station where they had relays of horses—had 'em when the Comanches didn't kill the station-masters and steal 'em. The change was kep' ready harnessed an hour or two before the stage was due and no time was lost takin' out and puttin' in, I'm here to tell you.

In good weather it was three hours from one stage to another, but it was often cut in two. On them good roads over the Kansas plains a hundred and thirty miles a day wasn't nothin' out of the common. When I say "day" I mean night, too. In stagin' there wasn't no night.

So you see what I was facin'. Not countin' Injins, which I might miss, I had to run agin a fresh four-horse team every fifteen mile and a fresh driver every twelve hours. I had one mule agin 'em all and I had to go it in four days and a little less to git there ahead of the stage. Looked like a fool thing to try, but shucks, I'd do it agin, old as I am, for that much money!

My aim was to hold old Ellick in and keep about even with the stage—well, a little ways ahead, maybe—and give him a little rest now and then. I knowed the last day was goin' to be the nip and tuck one, if we lasted that long.

The settlements didn't come west of Topeky in them days and I knowed I didn't have much show of hirin' a horse off of somebody for even the last day, because them early settlers didn't have no horses to spare, for one thing, and they was as suspicious as old Ned for another. They wouldn't trust no man acrost the rise of the hill. I didn't have but six bits in the world—all Al and me could scrape together when I left, and my old mule dead, or my old mule dyin', wouldn't 'a' been no security to tempt one of them settlers to lend me a critter to finish the race on.

Well, I rode all the first night, old Ellick rollin' along in a sort of a c'yote lope, turnin' from the trail onct to go and ram his nose into a water-hole that he remembered off to one side. In the mornin' I looked behind me from the top of one of them little hills, but I couldn't see no stage. I'd cut off a good many miles by ridin' acrost places where no wagon couldn't 'a' went and I felt so easy that I lit out of the saddle and me and old Ellick we took breakfast right there, where the ground was high and we could watch for 'em. We rested up, and then we racked out agin.

Nothin' didn't happen that day. Me and Ellick we poled right on, cuttin' off bends and corners and gainin', I reckon, twenty-five mile on the stage by them tricks. Whenever we was follerin' the stage-trail and come to a station, we never stopped to gab. I just passed the boys with a wave of m' hand, leavin' 'em standin' gapin' after me like a pack of danged old Robi'son Crusaws out there in the middle of the pe-rairie ocean.

I knowed they thought two things, them that didn't recanize me: first, that I was a onsociable cuss; next, that I'd killed somebody back there with a train and 'd got away in the night.

We stopped at water a long time after dark and I took off old Ellick's bridle and saddle and picketed him out. I felt easy, knowin' we was way ahead, but I cal'ated to be on the move agin by midnight when I laid down to take a little snooze. It was one of them little pe-rairie owls settin' in a shumake bush at m' head, makin' his shivery old noise like a ghos', 'at woke me up. I set up kind of bumfuzzled. I knowed I had somethin' on hand that was pressin', but I couldn't think where I was at. It was frosty and I felt stiff and cold in every j'int, and all I could git straight in m' head for a while was that I needed a fire to lay by and finish m' sleep.

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I COME straight after a minute, saddled old Ellick and lit out. He was as fresh as a bunch of laylocks and we made the dust fly. Mornin' come sneakin' out like a prowlin' Injin to meet us before we'd been goin' long, and say, then's when I begun to git fidgity! I cussed m'self for layin' there and maybe sleepin' away them $10,000—my own wages as well as the money belongin' to the other fellers, too. I kep' a-lookin' back and a-lookin' back at the top of every rise, and as the day went on and I didn't see no stage, I begun to git easy agin. But I didn't monkey along none, I'm here to tell you!

We took a bite at noon and on we went, and just a bit before the sun dipped down I drawed up on a knoll and looked back. I'd been cuttin' off all I could all day and hadn't passed by a single station, but I was back on the stage-trail then. The sun made a kind of a yaller light that pitched great big shadders along the ground, and showed up every standin' and movin' thing as fur as a man's eyes could reach. Well, I didn't see no stage and I turned in m' saddle and lit out singin' a song.

I didn't git very deep in that song, I'm here to tell you, because away down yonder I seen a sight that cut the breath out of m' whistler like a swaller of campfire. I seen the stage-station off ahead in a little valley and the stable and the corral and the horses in it, and swinge my whiskers if I didn't see the *stage* a-crawlin' up to it like a ant, and the four fresh horses a-standin' there ready to be hitched on!

It'd et up them miles I'd gained offen it while I was layin' there in the buffalo grass poundin' m' year like a buck Injin full of copper-kittle soup.

I was a good two mile off, but I thought I could pass while the passengers was at supper. But they didn't stop for supper. Behind time, I reckon, and intended to eat at the next station. They pulled out while I was a good mile off and I just felt m' heart draw up like a piece of buffalo-meat on a bed of coals. I reckon if I'd 'a' been opened then it wouldn't 'a' been no bigger 'n a p'tater.

Well, we didn't stop for no supper that night, me and old Ellick. Took a drink out of a little crick and just kep' a-goin' on. I'd felt sure of old Ellick up to that p'int —he'd been through nearly as much before at a pop—but I didn't believe, in the bottom of m' soul, that he'd ever last to make the end of that hell-fired race over a piece o' paper no bigger 'n m' hand. All that night I looked for the old feller to peter out and I often stopped him and got off, feelin' of him and listenin' to him breathe.

I've seen them ingineers of railroad trains do that, poke around and feel of their machines, and when I see one of 'em at it I think of me and old Ellick, durn his old hide. Shucks!

I passed the stage before mornin', too, while it was standin' at a station, the passengers asleep inside of it. A dog heerd me go by and barked, and the drivers and station-boss come out and hollered, but I never said a word—just kep' right on. We struck the sand-hills purty soon and I begun to feel kind of sure agin, because stagin' was slow and heavy over that stretch and they had to put on eight horses instead of four. By sun up I was leadin' 'em good agin and early in the forenoon I come to what I knowed was the last water in fifty mile.

That was a station and I paid the feller m' six bits for a pan of bacon and a pot of coffee. Old Ellick 'peared to be in good shape and I give him a feed of grain. I told the feller I wanted to sleep one hour, and for him to wake me up on the dot—sooner if the stage come in sight. He didn't ask no questions, but he wasn't what you might call warm and friendly. But he woke me, anyhow, and we went on.

I don't remember the rest of that day very good—never could git a-holt of it, somehow, but I know I slep' some and was woke now and then by the scrub brush that growed along in spots, whippin' agin m' stirrups as old Ellick loped, straight acrost them sand-hills as a goose flyin' to her nestin'-place up north.

Night come on and the moon rose and went on up and up, like your old granny was up there carryin' her old brass kittle acrost the sky with the sun shinin' on the bottom of it, and when mornin' come me and Ellick was acrost the sand. We met a train of Mormons headed for the Promised Land and I asked them to wake me after I'd slep' another hour. Shadder of David, but that was the shortest hour I ever seen!

ON THE afternoon of the fourth day we rose a hill and I could see Leavenswuth, five mile off. Old Ellick was done up. He just crep' along,

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his head down and his breath comin' short, like he didn't care whuther it was yisterday 'r day-after-to-morrow, 'r whuther it was Leavenswuth 'r Sand Francisco. I was in a kind of a light-headed spell, too, more over the worryin' than the hard ridin' and the loss of sleep, but I petted and coaxed the old feller and tried to hearten him to hold out.

The stage had been in sight all day and crawlin' up on us, too, like fire travelin' up a string, and I knowed I couldn't git down and go a mile on foot before it'd be on top of me. It looked like the whole thing was up and I'd lost, and in my light-headedness thinkin' over it I chugged old Ellick in the ribs with m' heels and welted him with the hobblin' rope. Well, that old feller he kind of turned his head around and walled up his eye, then he flopped down there in the road like he was gone!

I reckon I must 'a' went crazy about that time. I must 'a' rared around there a good bit. When I come to I was down on m' knees side of that mule, bawlin' like a calf. I thought he was dead. Well, I kind of sobered up in a minute and set down to think what was to be done, and blame me if I wasn't so danged dog-fagged that I went to sleep!

I didn't know nothin' till I heerd a whoopin', and I set up and looked around me like a feller fallin' into the middle of next week. The stage was alongside of me and that fat feller was settin' beside the driver, an the driver was grinnin'! The passengers, 'cept the clerk from Rogers Brothers, was gethered around old Ellick, who wasn't no more dead 'n a rabbit.

He was a-standin' snippin' grass by the side of the road like he never had no $10,000 check on his mind in his life. That clerk was stoopin' over me, offerin' a bottle, but I didn't stop to find out what was in it. Bet not. I bolted for old Ellick and hopped on to him, swung his head toward Leavenswuth and loped off! Loped like them stage passengers was all down and dyin' off with the smallpox or the cholery, and they give me a cheer to boost me along.

Well, that young man tole me afterward what happened then. He said that fat feller elbowed the driver and said, "Say, whip up, will you?" and offered him somethin' that looked like money as he spoke. "I've got to beat that feller to Leavenswuth," he says.

That there driver eyed him, with his foot on the brake; then he looked after me. "What you got to beat him for?" says he.

"I'll double it if you beat him," says Fatty. "It means money to me."

"Is he a forger 'r somethin'?" says the driver.

"Oh, drive on!" says Fatty, just that-away. "Oh, drive on, drive on! We can talk as we travel."

"You say you got to beat that feller?" says the driver.

"Yes," says Fatty, "that old mule's went four hundred mile in the last four days; he can't go much furder. If you beat him by five minutes I'll hand you five hundred dollars!"

"And if that feller beats you he gits the money?" says the driver. "Is that the game?"

"He ain't got no right to it," says Fatty; "he's a scoundrel!"

"But he gits it if he beats you, what?"

"That's what he's ridin' his mule to death for," says Fatty.

"All right," says the driver, "from the looks of things he needs it more'n you do. Anyhow, I got to take a look at that there hind axle-tree before we go on."

Well, he monkeyed around that there axle fifteen minutes or more, till I was nigh into town and then he drove on, easy! I got there in time to git the company's lawyer to 'dentify me at the bank and git the money and then I put old Ellick in a stable and told 'em to treat him like he was the king of beasts.

I WAS beat out, I can tell you, just like I'd been mauled. I slep' till mornin', them there ten thousand dollars under m' piller. When I got up I didn't wait for breakfas' before I went to see how old Ellick was. Well, he was as limber as a hick'ry switch and ready for another round, dad bust his old hide!

Well, 'long in the mornin' I went to that company lawyer's office and told him Rogers Brothers was busted and all how it was that I come to be there, but he knowed the story already—it'd got all over town. Well, that law shark he set there a while and mumbled away on his tobacker like a nineteen-year-old cow a mussin' a nubbin in her mouth, lookin' at me kind of overbearin' and slightin', and purty soon he spit and says,

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"You done well, so fur as endurin' and holdin' out's concerned—you done very well, young feller. But p'int o' law you're the redickaloustest feller I ever seen! P'int o' law you didn't have no need to worry, because labor debts is what is knowed as preferred claims. Nothin' comes in ahead of labor debts," he says, "and you fellers was safe. As fur as endurin' and holdin' out goes, as I said before, you done well, but p'int o' law you ain't nothin' but a damn fool!"

Well, I just set there with m' mouth a-gappin' like you'd jerked away the bone I'd been a-chawin', and then purty soon m' Irish riled up.

"Dang you," says I, "that's just like a fool lawyer to say such a thing! I never knowed of a lawyer bein' in the right place at the right time! Now, if you'd 'a' been out there at Bent's Ford when I started and 'a' come up as I was a-gittin' on m' mule and handed me that little bundle of advice, it'd 'a' counted, but right here in Leavenswuth, Kansas, pardner, it ain't wuth no more to me 'n a pair of cotton britches 'd be to you in the place where you're a-headin' for, where they don't even have ice for their lemonade on Fourth of July!" I says.

Then I got up and I poled out.

THE BRASS CHEST

by Adolph Bennauer*

THE German ship *Satara* was steaming westward across the Arabian sea through a night of velvet blackness and Afric torridity. On the windward side of the saloon-deck lounged a group of gentleman tourists, Americans all, minus coats, vests, collars and shoes—anything that tended to keep out the whisper of breeze the way of the vessel was producing. The night was far advanced, but there was no enduring the heat-stench in those stalls of staterooms, so they had chosen the slightly cooler deck, seeking palliation in stories and cigarettes.

A red blur, no larger than a bead-point, flashed into being from the darkness.

"H'm, somebody else turned out," com-

*See page 380.

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mented the obese editor, sucking audibly on a slim panetela.

The lean attorney peered ahead with knitted brows.

"Wrong," he announced decisively. "Too far away. That's a ship's light. Looks to me——"

"Li-i-ght, on the port bow, sir," wailed the lookout forward.

The gentlemen's chairs hit the deck with a simultaneous thud. Along the little group ran a thrill of apprehension. They feared to make comment lest they break the uncanny stillness.

"All right, all right!"

The officer on the bridge stepped quickly forward and pulled the whistle-cord, for the strange light was very near. At the same instant, in the direction of the red blur, came more lights—tens and scores of them —winking out into the blackness of the night like the eyes of some waking paleozoic monster. As an accompaniment came a medley of Oriental grunts and shrill, falsetto whines, showing plainly that the craft was almost upon them.

"Chink, py gosh!" the officer muttered disgustedly. A row of electric lights blazed out along the *Satara's* sides and revealed a huge native junk rooting her way toward them through the short, choppy swells. "Geep avay! Geep avay!" shrieked the fear-stricken officer. "*Verdampter schwein*——"

His remark was cut short in the shock of the collision. For one fleeting second the blunt nose of the junk kissed the German's bulging side. In that instant a man, a white man, sprang to the rail, executed a flying leap through the air and landed, cat-like, upon the steel deck of the steamer. In one hand he clutched a bulky object—apparently a camera—with the other he waved a gallant farewell to the vessel he was leaving.

"Velly fine, Wah," he called cheerily. "See you in 'Frisco, maybe. Good-by!"

"Glood-ba-ayh," came the feline whine, and the lights went out aboard the junk and she drifted, gasping and groaning, astern.

"American, by gum!" cried the doctor with feeling.

"And he hails from 'Frisco!" sobbed the attorney.

"Takes a Westerner to do a thing like that," grunted the editor with envious admiration. He was of New York.

Below them, on the forward deck, they could hear the new arrival holding heated converse with the indignant German Captain. For three minutes the spirited argument held; then the two departed for the ship's office. The American had won.

"Hope he gets a stateroom near me," sighed the young novelist. He was also an enthusiastic camera fiend.

"Looks like good stuff," commented the editor, with the feature-columns of the *International* always in mind. "Bet he's a newspaper man. Hope he drifts up here."

He came, but he flew, rather than drifted. The lights on the *Satara* had been switched off as soon as the excitement wore down and they had no warning of his approach till he swung around the corner of the deck-house and burst among them. An unwieldy camera of the reflex type swung by a strap from his shoulder; his pockets bulged with cartons of film-packs.

"Evening, gentlemen," he thrilled in a voice hysterical with excitement. "You're Americans? Thank God! Anybody got a camera among you?"

The novelist was opening his mouth to speak, but the psychological aspect of the situation gripped him and his mind wandered. The fleshy man of editorial fame sacrificed his cigar to the waves and quickly made a place for the stranger at his side. He indicated the confused author with a stubby thumb.

"*You?*" shrilled the stranger. "I want some developer, quick! Don't care what. I want it *now!* This climate's —— on emulsion."

"I—I did have some, back in Calcutta," began the novelist vaguely.

"But you haven't got any now? Oh, ——!" groaned the stranger.

"Wait!" The editor was out of his chair and had laid a hand like a steel vise upon him. "Pull yourself together, man! If it's big I'll buy it. There's the ship's physician. He'll fix you up some pyro, maybe."

"Pyro! Yes, quick!"

Together they raced off in the muddy darkness.

Among the group of men left behind was only the sound of deep breathing, only the waning and glowing of their cigarette-tips. The silence was too portentous, too sacred to be broken. Five minutes later the two returned, smacking their lips over the memory of the iced drinks.

"All right," said the editor magnani-

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mously, with a wave of his pudgy hand, "we've fixed up our friend O. K. Developer's being prepared and cooled in the refrigerator. In the meantime Mr. Steele is going to tell us a story. Biggest beat of the twentieth century. All about the disappearance of the Kimberley chest of diamonds. D'ye remember? It's a scoop, a world-smashing scoop, and it's mine before he tells it, start to finish. Mr. Steele, allow me to present my friends."

And the introductions followed in due order.

Steele settled himself with the air of a man who comes for the first time upon the witness-stand. The drinks had calmed him somewhat, but there still ran through his brain the fever-heat of the night and the story. He cuddled his box-like photographic machine in his lap, gripped the rail with a yellow talon and plunged nervously into his tale.

II

IT CAME about in the manner of the story-books you read, only this was life. Two months ago, I was stranded in Pretoria among the natives. I'd just finished a little assignment work for my paper down there, when I got a cable of discharge. Change in editorial offices somewhere, I guess. These things happen devilish quick. Point is, it was a dead hole around Pretoria and I had just enough money left to get home.

I worked my way to Delagoa Bay somehow and learned that in a few days a consignment of diamonds was to be sent up the coast to Zanzibar for shipment to Holland. I poked around a bit and discovered that the *Pandora* was the craft they had selected to take the stones up the coast. She didn't carry passengers, but she carried me. I can't tell you how I did it. It's a trick of the trade. Ask any newspaper man.

I couldn't call the *Pandora* a steamship; not since I've crossed the drink in the *Lusitania*. But she was a handy little boat all around and manned by a set of lads who'd frolic with the Devil. I'm not exaggerating—I know 'em. Captain Potts was Pennsylvania Dutch, squat and hairy and pig-headed. A little later I called him mighty incautious. He was waiting for the chest of diamonds to come down, he said, when he intended to take it aboard and sail immediately. Seeing that I wasn't in any particular hurry myself and being naturally curious to catch a glimpse of the chest, I decided to wait until it arrived and go aboard with him.

Half an hour later, sure enough, it came. They brought it down to the wharf in a covered rig, and four native police and one white man, the agent of the Kimberley Company, convoyed it. It was a small brass chest, about a foot wide by two feet long, and was covered all over with labels and stamps and nickel filigree work. It wasn't heavy; the whole weight lay in the chest itself; but I had heard that one of the stones alone weighed a hundred and seventy-two carats. You should have seen the way those wharf-rats ogled it out across the bay. The hair stood up along the back of my head all the way out to the ship.

When we bumped against the *Pandora's* side the rail was cluttered with a row of the wickedest-looking pirates I'd ever laid eyes on. It was the vessel's crew turned out, *en masse*, to receive us. For a full minute they hung there and just stared down at us, blinking, blinking stupidly out of the effect of their first startled impressions. Then the chest went up, hand over hand, and landed safely on the deck of the steamer. Potts followed it and I came after.

By the time we reached the deck two men had caught up the chest and were bearing it below. One of them was the first mate; the other a great big brute of a man I'd only seen the back of. The crew still hung about the waist with the look of a pack of hungry jackals, thawing gradually out of their fit of astonishment. I didn't like their looks a little bit, and, in view of the careless manner in which he had flaunted the chest before them, I decided that Potts needed a lecture on caution.

"Look here, Captain," I said anxiously, "oughtn't you be a little more discreet in handling that chest? Don't flash it about so much in the open, I mean. You saw how the crew acted."

He stared at me with his infantile, ancestral smile.

"I haff seen," he grunted, "*aber, was ist los?* Am I nod der Captain? Dose men I haff mineself chosen, und I know der breed vell. Dey vill look pad und dey vill growl mooch behint my back; *aber*, mutiny, nefer! Mineself, I gan vip dem mit bot' han's tied,

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und venn I vas nod able, der iss Lisbon, to whom I shall make you agquainted."

We had just put foot on the companion-stairs, when we confronted the two men returning from below. I gripped Potts hard and shot a terrified glance about me, wondering if I hadn't stepped into a morgue. The man beside the mate was a negro, the biggest man-mountain I'd ever seen. He bulked up beside his companion, who was a straight six feet himself, like a lamp-post beside a child. But that wasn't his peculiarity; it was his color. According to the rest of his race he should have been black. Lisbon was white! Not pink and creamy, like a Caucasian, but *absolutely* white; as white as a billiard ball or a sheet of paper or, better yet, like old gray ivory. It was an albino color and he was an albino negro, with red, staring eyes. Otherwise he was common. His wool was black and kinky, his features as blunt and coarse as those of the ordinary type.

"Now, I hope dot you vill rest easy," Potts grinned good-naturedly, when he introduced the negro to me as his second mate. "I could haff stowed der shest in der forecastle und der vould haff been no trouble."

"Trouble? Don' need to trouble erbout dat, sar," the negro sniffled reassuringly, whipping the sweat from his eyes with the back of a leprous hand. "Yo' comp'ny didn't make no mistake w'en dey done ship de brass chest aboahd de *Pandora*. She'm safe hyar, sar. Yah, yah!"

He ran off into a chuckle of contemplative satisfaction and strode forward with the gliding motion of an ape, his back-tilted head and his slabs of hands swinging open and abreast of the knee further enhancing the analogy. It suddenly dawned upon me that he considered me an agent of the Kimberley Company. I let the matter pass as one of small moment and didn't take the trouble to explain. I wished later that I had. But, then, there wouldn't have been any story.

THE next day I loaded my machine and went forward to get in touch with that hellion crew. It was an ideal day, photographically. Most people would have called it hot. The men were hard at work slushing down, tarring rigging and polishing brass. Lisbon stood over them, open-breasted, bare-footed and bare-headed, perspiring odorously. With all that display of dead, white flesh and those red, rolling eyes he looked more inhuman and ghastly than before. I never could grow used to him. I operated an open lens and caught the crew in action. They were "factors," as the young novelists say, that figured in the fortunes of the brass chest, so I'm going to describe them to you as Lisbon pointed them out and described them to me.

First, there was Croom. He was Scotch, surly and insolent, a gray-headed man, with a hand always playing abstractedly about the haft of his sheath-knife. Then, there was Thurles, big, beefy and English; consequently, stolid and disagreeable. Gorteen, whom I met next, was Portuguese, slim, active, vivacious, a man also addicted to sheath-knives. Savona was Dago all over, except that there wasn't a hair on his face. He'd have looked a danged sight prettier if there had been, for he was mottled like a leopard with the ravages of small-pox, and his upper lip was split like the bark of a hickory-nut, so that at the bottom it was actually in two pieces. Ust Smolenski and Jarlsen were Russian and Swede respectively and are to be classed as one, for both had the characteristics of jackals and hated Lisbon openly and heartily.

That was the outward appearance of the men to whose tender mercies the Kimberley Company had entrusted a chest of diamonds. I had reason, even then, to believe that their hearts were as black as their looks. That evening, while Potts and I sat over a cigar at the cabin table, I remonstrated with him.

"You picked out those cut-throats yourself, Captain?" I demanded. "Do you realize that you'll be having mutiny and piracy on your hands one of these days?"

"You iss misdaken," he declared gravely. "You haff read doo many books. Haff I held gommand den years for nodding? Dit you dake node," he thundered, "dot dere iss no man in der forecastle vich iss of der same nationality ass hiss fellow? I could haff shipped a *dutzena* Americans or Britishers at Delagoa Bay, *aber* den I vould haff been der fool of vich you speak. Ven der men in der forecastle are nod of der same guntry dey hate each odder und dey don't make no troubles for der after-guard. *Verstehen?*"

I yielded. Somewhere in that wooden head of his was a trace of sanity. But sud-

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denly my eye caught sight of the brass chest reposing openly upon the safe in the cabin and I knew what it was that had provoked my argument with him.

"That's all right, Captain," I said hurriedly, "but what's the use of advertising the diamonds like that? For heaven's sake, can't you find another place to keep them besides there? Why, the whole galley force pass in and out of here every day."

"Und vat den?" he grinned vapidly. "Suppose—suppose dot dey should steal it. Vat vould dey do? Svim mit it ashore?"

I got hot under the collar and prophesied wildly.

"They can mutiny!" I snapped. "They can steal the ship itself. They can come aft some dark night and cut our throats while we're sleeping. It's been done before."

I flung out of the cabin in high dudgeon, almost beside myself at his arrant stupidity and bull-headedness. In point of fact, the location of the brass chest disturbed me mightily. You can't place such a temptation before your fellow-man with impunity. More than once I had caught the steward ogling it with ill-concealed avarice. Strake, the mate, did the same; also, Lisbon and the cook, the engineer—anybody who had occasion to visit the cabin.

For the next few days, in consequence, I maintained a sour aloofness and spoke to Potts only at meal-times, and then merely upon such hackneyed themes as the state of the weather and the progress of the vessel. I had my own opinion of German sea-captains, and it was not flattering. Had it been a matter strictly of his own concern, I should have said nothing, but in his refusal to listen to caution he was endangering not only his own life but mine also, and that of every honest man on board.

Then, coming down to breakfast one morning, I noted that there was no longer any brass chest in the cabin. The top of the safe, whereon it had rested, was bare. For an instant, so overwrought was my mind with fears, I fancied that Lisbon and the crew had already taken possession of the vessel. But the next moment I observed Potts seated at the table, staring at me with a sheepish grin.

"Ve haff removed id," he said perfunctorily, "Mr. Strake und me. Ve haff gleaned oud der safe und stowed id insite. He, also, iss begin to be misdaken, und bedween der two off you, you haff made me ass pig an *asel* ass yourselves!"

At that my grouch melted like butter. He wasn't such an impossible Dutchman, after all.

"That's more like it," I cried cheerily. "Do you know, Captain, I've been losing sleep over this affair. I dreamed last night that Lisbon was choking the life out of me with one of those big stone-crushers of his. I wouldn't trust that fellow any farther than I could reach him. Does he know navigation?"

"He hass a furst mate's certificate," the skipper returned sourly, "und he knows dese seas like der gompass cart. *Aber*, I fear noddings from him. He iss nod vun off de grew."

"He isn't?" I retorted. "How do you know? I hope you weren't fool enough to trust him with a knowledge of the chest's location?"

The wooden head wagged ponderously and the blue eyes stared at me with about as much expression as a pair of doorknobs.

"Ve dit nod," he returned slowly. "*Aber* he knows dot id iss stowed in der safe. So Mr. Strake hass told me."

"Well," I reflected bitterly, "it doesn't make much difference now. He's seen too much of it to be able to forget about it. I am very much afraid, Captain, that you are still in danger of losing it."

Potts put down his cup and arose, his pig-like eyes still upon me.

"So pe id," he grunted amiably. "*Aber* efen den der diamon's iss nod yed gone. Ve haff seen to dot part off id, Mr. Steele; ve haff seen to dot!"

And with a ludicrous grin, into which he was evidently striving to throw a world of meaning, he left me and mounted to the deck.

SO, YOU see, we had been "warned," as the mediums say. But this is a practical world and aboard the *Pandora* we didn't take stock in the occult. When the mutiny occurred, five days after we left Delagoa Bay, it came like a thunderclap out of a clear sky. Potts and I were lingering over the breakfast table when we became aware of a slight scuffle on the deck overhead, followed by the bull voice of the albino negro bursting forth into ribald song. An instant later he was joined by a chorus.

Potts pushed back his chair and gaped at

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me. I set down my cup rather hastily and stared back at him, equally astonished. As yet, I didn't comprehend. I remember the first emotion I exhibited was in sudden laughter. I could think only of Potts' stupid face and the unprecedented mockery of his quarter-deck. You see how it is, how trivial things are really the agents that affect us in times of great moment. But we didn't stop to ponder the thing psychologically. We left the table in flying order and bolted to the deck.

The sun blazed cheeringly out of the east; the sky overhead was just paling to a filmy blue. Alongside, a running sea licked and bubbled. These things we took in with half an eye, as sailormen do. Then our gaze came back to the deck. Lisbon was in full possession of the vessel. How he had ever managed it, I could never tell. The whole mutiny had been planned and carried out with the utmost secrecy. I discovered later, however, that two-thirds of the crew were involved. His head men—the ruffians who bunked forward—stood confronting us with drawn revolvers, and along the bulwarks lay a row of victims, bound and gagged, among whom I recognized the loyal Strake.

From the wheel-house above, Lisbon conned the situation.

"T'row dat fat Dutchman an' hog-tie him!" he commanded. "Mistah Steele, yo' come heah!"

I went—without delay. Curiously enough, I wasn't afraid of him. I only regretted that I hadn't brought along my camera. You don't get a picture like that every day.

"Set daown," he said, "Ah want to talk to yo'."

I did so, and lit a cigarette. There's nothing like putting up a bold front.

"Mistah Steele," he began autocratically, "Ah don' wan' to hab no bloodshed erbout dis affaih, but Ah wants dem dahmon's. Ah'll steah dis ship fo' de neares' ahlan' an' sen' de skipper an' his pahty asho'. But yo' stay wif us. Ah'se gwine toe gib yo' yo'r libahty now, on condition dat yo' is tractable. Dey yent nobuddy got a key toe de brass chest but yo' an' Ah wants yo' toe open it w'en Ah gives de wohd. Ah'll git de combination ob dat safe off'n Cap'n Potts to-night. Sabbie?"

I sabbied. Since the rôle of company agent gave me my liberty, I determined to play it to the finish. I didn't have any key, of course, and chests like that are hard to open, but I've played the game before.

"Certainly," I answered without hesitation, "but I'll take no share of the plunder. I'm doing it under compulsion. Understand?"

His corpse-like grin assured me that he did.

Our course was now east-by-north, and we kept it up till we reached the island. In the meantime I remained below and surreptitiously worked on the lock of the brass chest. True to his word, Lisbon had learned the combination of the safe, and the chest had been dragged out of it and again placed on top. This, I suppose, was done for the purpose of showing the men that he was playing fair. I worked hard on that lock, for upon my ability to open it, I knew, depended my life.

I had voluntarily acknowledged myself to be an agent of the Kimberley Company and it was plain that the albino negro would hold me to my word. There were three locks in all, one on each of the metal bands that girded the chest. No two of them were alike and no key that I could devise would fit them. For two days I labored without result, then I gave the affair over to luck and turned my attention to other things.

I approached the negro one day and requested an interview with the Captain. It was granted without the slightest reluctance. Potts appeared more cheerful than I had expected. The mutineers had unbound him and his companions and had confined them in the after cabin, contenting themselves with maintaining two armed sentinels outside the door. He grinned stupidly when he saw me and invited me to have a drink.

There were ten of them in there and they had been making merry for the last two days, all the time I had been racking my brains over the chest. I thought at first that he would show some sense of humiliation, in view of the confident air he had professed previously, but he was strangely indifferent. He said that the mutineers were welcome to the chest if they wanted it so badly.

I left him in a more cheerful frame of mind. I had told him my trouble and he had given me much information about locks in general. When I tried my hand on the brass chest the next day it opened easily. I didn't get a look-in at the dia-

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monds, though, for inside was a paper cover, sealed and stamped, though I must say the seal was very clumsily managed. I didn't want Lisbon to think that I was as curious as my own beating heart informed me, so I left the seal unbroken and came away with a clear conscience.

THREE days later, by reason of Lisbon's admirable navigation, we made the island. He had known where he was going before ever the *Pandora* left Delagoa Bay. We ran into a snug little cove on the east shore. A regular story-book island it was, with a ragged reef, shelving beach and a glut of vegetation in the interior. Yes, it's down on the maps and its latitude and longitude are well defined, but I'm not going to give the secret away. It's worth many shekels. I've got a picture of it here. There was no anchoring the steamer, for the beach was a straight pitch-off, so we carried a cable ashore and made it fast to a coco palm.

As soon as this was done, the men knocked off and came aft for the council. The wonder of it was that they had kept away from the brass chest this long. I stood by, at Lisbon's command, in case there should be need of my services. I had the machine with me and I used it. Outside of Stevenson, you never dreamed of such a setting nor such costuming. There was the ship, quite prosaic and up-to-date, with that heterogeneous collection of swashbucklers defiling her quarter-deck, and with an emerald island for a background.

It was decided, *pro concilia*, that they would first rid themselves of the Captain's party. Accordingly, with hammock and chest, the loyal fellows were sent ashore. Potts had two chests and many other things, and took his time in departing, much to the wrath of Croom and Savona, who lost patience and wished to pitch him bodily over the rail. I remember, as he passed me I caught a whiff of his breath, and it reeked of lager.

"Goot-pye, Lisbon," he called thickly, with an airy wave of the hand. "I vushes you mooch choy py dose diamon's. Ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha!" echoed the mate; and on my life, I'd swear *he* wasn't drunk. Staid Strake? No, no!

We saw them depart, man and baggage, into the jungle Then Ust Smolenski and Jarlsen set up a howl for the chest. The negro bared his fangs and declared that it would be brought when he was ready for it. At present he was hungry and would eat. So he did, and the rest followed suit. Looking back on this small circumstance, I am moved to marvel. Providence has a way of its own in working out a tragedy. We can never discover its plot-scheme till the *finis*. The present case was an example. If it hadn't been for Lisbon's obstinacy, Potts and his men wouldn't have had time to get away, and—well, there wouldn't have been any more story.

While we ate, we appeared to be very calm and we discussed every other subject under the sun but diamonds. My rôle was obvious, but it wasn't so easy to portray. Being a newspaper man, however, I succeeded in putting up what I considered to be an indifferent front. As soon as we had finished, Lisbon caught up the chest as if it had been a ditty-box and bore it to the deck. We trooped after him like a litter of pups, fairly crazed with excitement. The chest was deposited in the middle of the deck and we clustered about it in a circle.

"All right, Mistah Steele," called the negro.

I swallowed hard, shifted my camera out of the way and dropped to my knees. Three quick turns of the keys and I threw the chest open and stepped modestly into the background. A gasp ran around the circle, which ended in disappointment when they caught sight of the seal.

"Steady, steady!" cautioned Lisbon. But his own eyes were flashing blood-red. Never had he looked so hideous as in that moment. He put forth a leprous hand and ripped the seal open, producing by his action a faint, clinking sound. With one accord we dashed forward and peered over his shoulder.

The next instant every man of us jumped back as if he'd been stung by a serpent. I'm used to believing my eyes at the outset, and in this case I wasn't the only spectator, so when I tell you that there wasn't anything in that chest but a dozen empty beer-bottles, you'll please accept it as fact! The instinct of my profession was strong upon me, even in that instant of stupefaction, and I snapped the men as they stood, open-mouthed and staring.

Equally as quickly I realized the precariousness of life. Once before, in the

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Boer war, I was just that near death. I had been through all the thrills and I knew what was coming to me. So I lost no time. The mutineers sat there like frozen images. Any moment would open the floodgates of their wrath—a wrath I had no mind to know. Before that moment came I was overside and marking time into the jungle. I can't remember the occasion I exhibited such speed, nor terror. Death itself is bad enough, but when it bids fair to come at the hands of a piebald, half-human ape, you may figure on experiencing all its uncanny horrors.

AS I ran there flashed into my mind the long train of circumstances that at the time had caused me so much wonder. Now everything was explained. The clumsy appearance of the seal, Potts' continued indifference, and his remark as he passed over the side. With his wooden head and his infantile smile and all, he was more acute than I had given him credit for. His removal of the diamonds had been a master stroke, though I could not help reflecting that the smart trick would have cost him his life had the mutineers discovered it before he left the vessel.

But along with my admiration for his cleverness I was conscious of a certain feeling of pique at his neglect to take me into his confidence. Why had he omitted to tell me of this? Surely, he did not distrust me? I wanted to stop a minute and figure the thing out, to discover what he might have done with the diamonds; but fear drove me on.

Nothing stayed me. Swinging branches whipped across my face and nearly put my eyes out; stringy undergrowth twined about my feet and threw me headlong. Still I fled. I left the jungle and came out into a sort of clearing, where a rank growth of bushes and fallen tree-trunks covered the ground. Warned by some strange intuition, I looked up. Straight before me, and not a hundred yards away, stood the Captain's party!

The next instant I had stopped short and sought the shelter of a tree. From where I stood, I could perceive easily what they were doing. Two of them had evidently been posted as sentinels, for they were gazing furtively about in all directions, as if, at any moment, they expected an attack from the mutineers. The remaining eight were engaged in lowering something into an excavation. Potts stepped aside for an instant and I caught a glimpse of the object. It was a small wooden chest of exactly the same dimensions as the one aboard the *Pandora*.

I don't know what it was that moved me, possibly that subtle, elusive sixth sense called the "news-instinct," but the next moment I had thrown my camera open and caught the chest as it was being lowered into the hole. I had a faint glimmering then that the picture would be valuable, but just how valuable I didn't learn till later.

So this was what had become of the diamonds, I reflected. Potts had very cleverly carried them ashore with him in his extra chest. And, certainly, the manner in which he was now disposing of them was most excellent, for unless a man had seen them buried he was likely to dig up the whole island before he found them.

I waited until they had covered the chest with earth and brushwood and resumed their march before I came forward. If they had not thought fit to trust me with their secret I would not trouble them with mine. They were obviously glad to see me and Potts guffawed loudly when I told him of the consternation that had come with the opening of the chest.

"That's all right," I said generously, "but what would you have done if they had opened that chest a little sooner?"

The blue eyes twinkled and the infantile grin once more appeared.

"Dey could nefer haff opened id midout dynamite," he assured me, "und dot dey vould nod dare do apoard ship. I made sure dot id vould nod pe opened pefore ve made land, pefore I giff you der tip about der lock."

And at that he went off into another paroxysm of laughter, followed this time by his companions.

"I shouldn't laugh yet," I advised him seriously. "We haven't seen the end of this. They're liable to be down upon us like a pack of wolves any moment!"

I wasn't wrong. We had hardly established camp on the other side of the island before we heard them approaching. They were no more than a quarter of a mile away and their shouts came plainly to our ears, the bull voice of the albino negro setting a chorus for the rest. The nature of their

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cries left no doubt in our minds as to their intentions. We drew our revolvers to a man and waited for them. I can't go into the details of that fight because I saw it from only one viewpoint, and that viewpoint was extremely limited, enduring for about twenty seconds after the beginning of the fracas.

Lisbon singled me out the moment he drove through the bushes and his rush was the rush of a mad bull. There was no opposing him. I had an automatic in my hand and I emptied the chamber at his breast. But he came on just the same! Whether my shots flew wild or whether he was bullet-proof I couldn't say, but the next moment I lost consciousness from a crashing blow on the head, just as three of our own men leaped forward to protect me.

IT WAS night before I came back to life. I don't see why I ever came to at all. Perhaps the negro thought he had finished me with that blow and the attentions of my three preservers had kept him too busy to make sure. A full moon was shining and I sat up rather groggily and looked about me. I was alone with the dead. There were at least twenty of them, and not a man breathed or moved a muscle. I rose to my feet, shivering with horror, and made my way to another part of the island. Then I sank down into a sand-pit and went off into a fit of unconsciousness that lasted till morning.

I awakened, feeling a great deal restored and a little cheerful, until the memory of my dead comrades came back to me. I won't trouble you with a detailed account of my life on the island. I remained there a month, till a Chinese junk blundered along and rescued me. In the meantime I buried the dead men, one by one, as my strength and the nature of my tools permitted.

Lisbon wasn't among 'em, nor Croom, nor Savona. Ten of the pirates, probably, had escaped. When I went around to the east shore of the island I found the little cove empty, with no trace of the *Pandora* remaining but her keel-mark on the sand. But they can't evade the law. I hold their fate in my hand here, in this one little packet of film. When that's developed they'll be tracked to the ends of the earth.

As soon as my cemetery was completed, lust got the better of me and I went back to the spot where the diamonds had been buried. I couldn't find it. You'd hardly believe me, but the fact is indisputable. The nature of the ground about there was all so much alike that for the life of me I couldn't tell under which rotten log the treasure lay. There's no human being who can tell, either, for Potts and the rest of them are dead. Science alone is able, science, embodied in one little strip of film here. When that is developed I can find the treasure easily. And *what* a treasure! Good God, I could demand any reward—a hundred thousand, a million!

III

STEELE was clearly beside himself. He rose to his feet and beat the rail in a frenzy. His audience was nearly as excited as he. The doctor alone preserved coolness.

"Come, come," he cried, "you can't let yourself go to pieces like this." He strode forward and grasped the man by the shoulder. "Calm yourself immediately," he ordered sternly, "or I'll give you the needle."

The corpulent editor had moistened his lips to speak, when a white-clad form shot around the corner of the deck-house and burst among them.

"De—de doctah say de dope am ready, sah!" he panted.

With a cry Steele tore himself loose and sprang forward.

"A million, a million!" he repeated hysterically. "Come along," he cried, inviting all with a sweep of the arm, "you can see for yourself. You don't know the island, so I won't be running any risk. But come and see!"

They came, but they were hard put to keep pace with him. Five minutes later the ten of them were crowded together in a stuffy little stateroom, whose only light came from a red paper lantern. On the table beside it reposed a pail of fresh water, a tray of pyro and another of hypo. Steele was bending over them, with a dozen sheets of film in his hand, nakedly exposed for development. The silence was unbroken by a breath. Suddenly he whipped a film out of the pack and immersed it in the developer.

"This is it," he croaked hoarsely, "the last one!"

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The breath of ten men was on his cheeks as he gently rocked the tray.

"Look! look!" he cried.

The high-lights were just beginning to appear—a strip of sky, the ragged outline of foliage, a smudge of indeterminate color in the foreground, and then, as usual, one overzealous individual pressed too closely upon the little table and knocked a film-pack to the floor. He bent to recover it, but the darkness hindered him. With a mutter of annoyance he reached up and turned on the lights and twelve sheets of film were forever ruined!

With a piercing cry Steele pitched forward, clutching at the tray and the naked films as he fell. But his cry was dimmed amid the bellows of rage that followed. Fear-stricken, the culprit remained mute, hiding himself cravenly among his fellows. The doctor sprang forward and laid a hand upon Steele's heart. Then he turned and confronted them with a white face.

"Dead!" he said hysterically. "Went off like that. God! it almost killed me!"

The editor was surveying with evident calm the batch of ruined films, now slowly turning slate color. He said nothing, but he looked hard at the fatal picture. Surely, there were trees there, and in the center was certainly something that looked like a group of men; but—he shook his head slowly and sighed—many men go mad in the East.

RILEY GRANNAN'S LAST ADVENTURE—AND AFTER

by Sam C. Dunham

IN THE desert mining camp of Rawhide, Nev., in the Spring of 1908, there was spoken over the body of a race-track gambler one of the most eloquent panegyrics that has been heard in this generation. That no more highly finished and impressive eulogy had been pronounced at the bier of any man since the immortal discourse of Robert G. Ingersoll at the grave of his brother, was the opinion of the men who heard it—and there were men in that audience whose opinion was worth while. .

The man who delivered the oration was Herman W. Knickerbocker, an itinerant minister of the gospel, prospector and mine promoter. It was spoken over the body of Riley Grannan, whose meteoric career as a race-track plunger for years furnished sensations for the newspapers.

The "atmosphere" of the occasion was unique. For an enviroment there was the bleak, windswept desert; for an audience, a motley crowd of adventurers drawn from almost every clime by the lure of gold; for a theme, the life, not of a multimillionaire, dying peacefully and full of honors in a Fifth Avenue mansion, but of a "busted" gambler, losing his "last chips" in a miner's shack; and the orator, not an overpaid pastor of a billion-dollar congregation, but a humble wanderer from the fold.

The rush of fifty thousand gold-seekers into Rawhide in the Spring of 1908 brought together as remarkable an aggregation of men as ever gathered in so short a time in any mining camp. As if by magic there sprang up a thriving, noisy, bustling city of 12,000 where a few months before the only sound that ever broke the immemorial silence of the desert was the weird cry of the coyote holding its night-long vigil in the barren, ghostly hills.

From the four corners of the world and

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its intervening spaces had come mining engineers of international reputation, young mine promoters, real-estate dealers, millionaire mine operators, merchants, lawyers, journalists, preachers—representatives of every profession and calling—all lured by the irresistible magic of the four-lettered word, "gold."

There were many distinct individual types—men of rare talent, even of genius, others that were ordinary and some very common. On the whole, however, the camp of Rawhide, at its inception, before the advent of the riff-raff of camp followers, contained as fine a body of men as ever foregathered in the West. They represented the true democracy of character which our "higher civilization" has so signally failed to produce in our overgrown cities. Those who live in the artifical atmosphere of a great city can not realize how much the natural—which are the good—impulses of the race dominate individuals in all the relations of life in our Western mining camps. There the search for gold does not have the demoralizing effect that the frenzy for money-grubbing has in the big cities. There, instead of stifling all the finer sentiments—turning men into selfish beasts—as it does in so many instances in a big town, it has the opposite effect, making them generous, big-souled, and humane. There you find all the sterling qualities playing forcefully all the time—divine charity, the greatest thing in the world, and all the good things that grow out of it.

Among the first to be attracted to the camp was Herman W. Knickerbocker. Mr. Knickerbocker was born in Louisiana, the son of an eminent jurist. At the age of twenty-one he was ordained a Methodist minister and became the pastor of a fashionable congregration in New Orleans. He was soon "called" to the Trinity M. E. Church in Los Angeles, where he quickly earned a reputation as one of the most eloquent pulpit orators on the Pacific Coast. His broad and liberal views proved unacceptable to the leaders of the church, however, and he was tried for heresy, but was acquitted. He then resigned.

Having marked dramatic talent, Mr. Knickerbocker decided to adopt the stage as a profession. With this end in view he went to Tonopah in the Spring of 1903 and there erected the Tonopah Opera-House. This enterprise was in advance of the demand for dramatic entertainment, however, and the opera-house reverted to the Tonopah Lumber Company, sharing the fate of many other too ambitious structures in that camp.

Mr. Knickerbocker then went to work as a common miner and labored under ground in the Tonopah mines for $4 a day to support his wife and four children.

DURING his stay in Tonopah Mr. Knickerbocker occasionally gave evidence that he was obsessed with deep-seated and well-nigh overmastering melancholy. He had a lovable, child-like disposition which endeared him to all who knew him. He was usually cheerful, even optimistic, but at times it required all his fortitude to overcome this tendency to melancholy. On one occasion, while he was trying to raise money to do the location work on his Goldfield claims, he went to "Diamondfield" Jack Davis, the most picturesque and one of the most generous characters in camp, and offered to sell him a Colt's forty-five for a few dollars.

"Jack, I don't know whether to sell this gun or to blow my brains out with it," Mr. Knickerbocker said.

Jack, who only a few years before had been sentenced to be hanged for the alleged killing of a sheep-herder up in Idaho but had been pardoned, replied:

"Knick, old boy, you musn't talk that way. Guns are made to blow the other feller's brains out. You just let me take care o' your'n till you feel better, an' here's fifty dollars to cheer you up a bit. An' don't never talk to me again about usin' a gun on the wrong man."

When the first news of the great gold strike at Goldfield was brought to Tonapah, Mr. Knickerbocker joined the rush to the new district and located several claims. To provide money to do the location work required by law to hold his claims, he gave a series of Shakespearian readings in Goldfield and Tonapah which were both financially and artistically successful. In these readings his impersonations of "Macbeth" and of two or three other characters showed that he possessed dramatic powers that would have assured him a successful career in the legimate drama.

Within two years Mr. Knickerbocker made his "clean-up" and left Goldfield

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with a fortune of about $300,000. For a year he was lost sight of by the people of the camp; but somewhere he must have been an active factor in financial affairs, for at the end of that time he returned to Goldfield broke.

He was among the first to join the stampede to the new camp of Seven Troughs, in northern Nevada and was the first to make a big "clean-up" there.

Half a year later, when the news of the Rawhide discoveries was brought to Reno, Mr. Knickerbocker was found to be "in the thick of it" once more.

Still later, when the camp was at the height of its boom, came Riley Grannan, the famous race-track plunger, who opened a gambling-house that for a time was the most popular resort in the camp. Here some of the biggest stakes ever wagered in the West passed over the tables.

Mr. Grannan, who had made and lost several fortunes on the turf, was dead broke when he reached Reno on his way to Rawhide. He had spent the Winter in San Francisco. When the newspapers began to print the sensational news sent out from Rawhide by the press agents he saw in these dispatches the name of Nat. C. Goodwin, who was the leading operator in the camp. He learned that George Graham Rice was in Reno with the mine-promoting firm of Nat. C. Goodwin & Co. Having known both in his race-track days, he decided to go to Reno and ask them to "stake" him to open a gambling-house in Rawhide.

It is a very common thing in the West for men to stake one another to go into business, particularly when the man asking for a stake has been successful in his line of endeavor. The Tonapah Club at Tonapah had made millions for George Wingfield and his partners. The Northern at Goldfield had made big fortunes for "Tex" Rickard and his associates. What more natural than to believe that a gambling-house in Rawhide, managed by so well-advertised a character as Riley Grannan, would become the most profitable enterprise of its kind in the camp and make a fortune for its owner? It did not take Mr. Grannan long to convince Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Rice that it was good business to stake him and that it was more than likely he would repay them handsomely.

They supplied him with a $20,000 bankroll, taking his notes, without interest, for the amount. First, however, they tried to dissuade him from going to Rawhide. He was just recovering from a long illness and was feeble. They feared he could not stand the rigors of the climate. But he was persistent. He said he could stand any climate "this side of hell." He offered them an interest in the business. They refused to accept it. Their only condition was, "Return the money when you can."

The enterprise was not a financial success. From the start Mr. Grannan played in bad luck. His resort was jammed with players day and night, but he was a steady loser.

ONE cold, stormy night, unheedful of the warnings of friends, Mr. Grannan walked out of his gambling-house, after a six-hours' sitting at poker, and "took in the town" without wearing an overcoat. As a result of the exposure he fell an easy victim to the prevailing scourge—pneumonia.

When news of Mr. Grannan's illness reached Reno, late the next night, Mr. Rice rushed a noted physician across the desert 150 miles to Rawhide in an automobile, at a cost of $500. But the physician's efforts were unavailing. Riley "cashed in."

Mr. Goodwin and Mr. Rice defrayed the expenses of Riley's illness and funeral and sent his body to the old home in Kentucky for interment. The bill was $1800. But no word of their unostentatious generosity in this instance, as in many others that might be cited, was ever given to the press, although they had their grip on the press-agenting of the camp. When the final curtain fell on Riley Grannan's Rawhide drama, his "angels" had expended about $22,000 on the disastrous venture.

Whenever a miner died in Rawhide Mr. Knickerbocker officiated at the funeral. The ceremonies on these occasions, although of the simplest character, were always rendered impressive by his heart-stirring words. Therefore no one in Rawhide was surprised when it was announced that Mr. Knickerbocker would perform the rites over the departed race-track plunger.

Indeed, it was most fitting that Herman W. Knickerbocker should say the last words at the bier of Riley Grannan. The two men, born and reared under such different circumstances and following callings

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so widely divergent, were yet strangely akin in temperament and experiences.

Mr. Knickerbocker was nurtured in luxury and educated for the higher walks of life. He had been the brilliant and idolized pastor of two fashionable congregations. But he had fallen by the wayside, had risen and had fallen again.

Mr. Grannan was born of poor parents. He began life as a bell-boy in a Louisville hotel. He was drawn to the race-track by listening to the talk of horsemen when they gathered in Louisville twice a year to attend the races. His career on the race-track was meteoric. But poverty and hardship were nothing new to him.

There was much in common between the two men. Both were generous to a fault. Many stories are told of Mr. Knickerbocker's open-handed generosity to the needy while he lived in Tonapah and Goldfield. It is a tradition of the race-tracks that no one ever applied to Mr. Grannan for aid and was turned away. After Mr. Knickerbocker left the ministry and made his fortune in Goldfield, he ran the gamut of a sporting life. There was in the nature of each a keen appreciation of the higher things of life and neither had sunk so low as not to be able to rise again. No one could realize better than Mr. Knickerbocker the heights and depths of such a nature as Mr. Grannan's.

The funeral was typical of a new mining camp. There was no hearse. The remains were conveyed in an express wagon from the undertaker's tent to the improvised chapel, a variety theater at the rear of the saloon. They gathered an audience so remarkable in aspect that it probably could not be duplicated anywhere else on earth. Men and women of every social station and grade closely commingled. A solemn hush hovered over the strange assembly. Dead silence reigned where a few hours before half-drunken auditors boisterously applauded the ribald jest and obscene songs of low-grade variety actors. But around the bier was gathered a throng of as sincere mourners as ever assembled at the coffinside of a departed friend.

THE eulogy pronounced by Mr. Knickerbocker was powerfully dramatic. His appearance was in keeping with the scene. Clad in the rough garb of a miner and wearing high boots, he looked the part of a typical pioneer. He deeply felt his subject. His eyes were dimmed with tears and at times his voice was choked by emotion.

Mr. Knickerbocker spoke without notes. A stenographic report of the oration was made by W. P. de Wolf, a well-known California newspaper man, and sent to Reno the same evening without revision by Mr. Knickerbocker.

Standing on a dais beside the catafalque, with one hand lightly touching the forehead of the dead man and the other uplifted, Mr. Knickerbocker told his auditors he proposed to show the deceased to have been a "dead-game sport" and that he had not lived his life in vain. He went on thus:

I FEEL that it is incumbent upon me to state that in standing here I occupy no ministerial or prelatic position. I am simply a prospector. I make no claims whatever to moral merit or to religion, except the religion of humanity, the brotherhood of man. I stand among you to-day simply as a man among men, feeling that I can shake hands and say "brother" to the vilest man or woman that ever lived. If there should come to you anything of moral admonition through what I may say, it comes not from any sense of moral superiority, but from the depths of my experience.

Riley Grannan was born in Paris, Ky., about forty years ago. I suppose he dreamed all the dreams of boyhood. They blossomed into phenomenal success along financial lines at times during his life. I am told that from the position of a bell-boy in a hotel he rose rapidly to be a celebrity of world-wide fame. He was one of the greatest plungers, probably, that the continent has ever produced.

He died day before yesterday in Rawhide.

This is a very brief statement. You have the birth and the period of the grave. Who can fill the interim? Who can speak of his hopes and fears? Who can solve the mystery of his quiet hours that only he himself knew? I can not.

He was born in the sunny Southland—in Kentucky. He died in Rawhide.

There is the beginning and the end. I wonder if we can see in this a picture of what Ingersoll said at the grave of his brother—"Whether it be near the shore or in mid-ocean or among the breakers,

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at last a wreck must mark the end of one and all."

He was born in the sunny Southland, where brooks and rivers run musically through the luxuriant land; where the magnolia grandiflora, like white stars, glow in a firmament of green; where crystal lakes dot the greensward and the softest Summer breezes dimple the wave-lips into kisses for the lilies on the shore; where the air is resonant with the warbled melody of a thousand sweet-voiced birds and redolent of the perfume of many flowers. This was the beginning. He died in Rawhide, where in Winter the shoulders of the mountains are wrapped in garments of ice and in Summer the blistering rays of the sun beat down upon the skeleton ribs of the desert. Is this a picture of universal human life?

Sometimes, when I look over the circumstances of human life, a curse rises to my lips, and, if you will allow me, I will say here that I speak from an individual point of view. I can not express other than my own views. If I run counter to yours, at least give me credit for a desire to be honest.

When I see the ambitions of man defeated; when I see him struggle with mind and body in the only legitimate prayer he can make to accomplish some end; when I see his aim and purpose frustrated by a fortuitous combination of circumstances over which he has no control; when I see the outstretched hand, just about to grasp the flag of victory, take instead the emblem of defeat, I ask, What is life? What is life? Dreams, awakening, and death; "a pendulum' twixt a smile and a tear;" "a momentary halt within the waste, and then the nothing we set out from;" "a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more;" "a tale told by an idiot; full of sound and fury, signifying nothing;" a child-blown bubble that but reflects the light and shadow of its environment and is gone; a mockery, a sham, a lie, a fool's vision; its happiness but Dead Sea apples, its pain the crunching of a tyrant's heel. I feel as Omar did when he wrote —

"We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the Sun-illumed Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the show;
"But helpless Pieces of the Game He Plays
Upon this Checker-board of Night and Days
Hither and thither moves, and checks and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

"The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;
And He that toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—He knows—HE KNOWS."

But I don't. This is my mood.

Not so with Riley Grannan. If I have gaged his character correctly, he accepted the circumstances surrounding him as the mystic officials to whom the universe had delegated its whole office concerning him. He seemed to accept both defeat and victory with equanimity. He was a man whose exterior was as placid and gentle as I have ever seen, and yet when we look back over his meteoric past we can readily understand, if this statement be true, that he was absolutely invincible in spirit. If you will allow me, I will use a phrase most of you are acquainted with. He was a "dead-game sport." I say it not irreverently, but fill the phrase as full of practical human philosophy as it will hold, and I believe that when you can say one is a "dead-game sport" you have reached the climax of human philosophy.

I believe that Riley Grannan's life fully exemplified the philosophy of these verses:

"It's easy enough to be happy
When life flows along like a song;
But the man worth while
Is the man who will smile
When everything goes dead wrong.

"For the test of the heart is trouble,
And it always comes with the years
And the smile that is worth
The homage of earth
Is the smile that shines through tears."

I know that there are those who will condemn him. There are those who believe to-day that he is reaping the reward of a misspent life. There are those who are dominated by medieval creeds. To those I have no word to say in regard to him. They are ruled by the skeleton hand of

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the past and fail to see the moral beauty of a character lived outside their puritanical ideas. His goodness was not of the type that reached its highest manifestations in any ceremonial piety. His goodness, I say, was not of that type, but of the type that finds expression in the handclasp; the type that finds expression in a word of cheer to a discouraged brother; the type that finds expression in quiet deeds of charity; the type that finds expression in friendship, the sweetest flower that blooms along the dusty highway of life; the type that finds expression in manhood.

He lived in the world of sport. I do not mince my words. I am telling what I believe to be true. In the world of sport—hilarity sometimes, and maybe worse. He left the impress of his character on this world and through the medium of his financial power he was able with his money to brighten the lives of its inhabitants. He wasted it, so the world says. But did it ever occur to you that the most sinful men and women who live in this world are still men and women? Did it ever occur to you that the men and women who inhabit the night-world are still men and women? A little happiness brought into their lives means as much to them as happiness brought into the lives of the straight and the good. If you can take one ray of sunlight into their night-life and thereby bring them one single hour of happiness, I believe you are a benefactor.

Riley Grannan may have "wasted" some of his money in this way.

Did you ever stop and think how God does not put all his sunbeams into corn, potatoes and flour? Did you ever notice the prodigality with which he scatters these sunbeams over the universe? Contemplate:

God flings the auroral beauties round the cold shoulders of the north; hangs the quivering picture of the mirage above the palpitating heart of the desert; scatters the sunbeams like gold upon the bosoms of myriad lakes that gem the verdant robe of nature; spangles the canopy of night with star-jewels and silvers the world with the reflected beams from Cynthia's mellow face; hangs the gorgeous crimson current of the occident across the sleeping-room of the sun; wakes the coy maid of dawn to step timidly from her boudoir of darkness to climb the steps of the orient and fling wide open the gates of the morning. Then tripping over the landscape, kissing the flowers in her flight, she wakes the birds to herald with their music the coming of her King, who floods the world with refulgent gold. Wasted sunbeams, these? I say to you that the man who by the use of his money or power is able to smooth one wrinkle from the brow of care, is able to change one moan or sob into a song, is able to wipe away one tear and in its place put a jewel of joy—this man is a public benefactor. I believe that some of Riley Grannan's money was "wasted" in this way.

We stand at last in the presence of the Great Mystery. I know nothing about it, nor do you. We may have our hopes, but no knowledge. I do not know whether there be a future life or not. I do not say there is not. I simply say I do not know. I have watched the wicket-gate close behind many and many a pilgrim. No word has come back to me. The gate is closed. Across the chasm is the gloomy cloud of death. I say I do not know. And if you will allow this expression, I do not know whether it is best that my dust or his at last should go to feed the roots of the grasses, the sagebrush or the flowers, to be blown in protean forms by the law of the persistence of force, or whether it is best that I continue in personal identity beyond what we call death. If this be all, "after life's fitful fever, he sleeps well; . . . Nothing can harm him further." God knows what is best.

THIS may be infidelity; but if it is, I would like to know what faith means. I came into this universe without my volition—came and found a loving mother's arms to receive me. I had nothing to do with the preparation for my reception here. I have no power to change the environment of the future, but the same power which prepared the loving arms of a mother to receive me here will make proper reception for me there. God knows better than I what is good for me, and I leave it with God.

If I had the power to-day by the simple turning of my hand to endow myself with personal immortality, in my finite ignorance I would refuse to turn my hand. God knows best. It may be that there is a future life. I know that sometimes I get very tired of this life. Hedged and cribbed,

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caged like a bird caught from the wilds, that in its mad desire for freedom beats its wings against the bars only to fall back in defeat upon the floor—I long for death, if it will but break the bars that hold me captive.

I was snowbound in the mountains once for three days. On account of the snow we had to remain immediately alongside the train. After three days of this, when our food had been exhausted, the whistle blew that meant the starting of the train out into the world again. It may be that death is but the signal whistle that marks the movement of the train out into the broader and freer stretches of spiritual being.

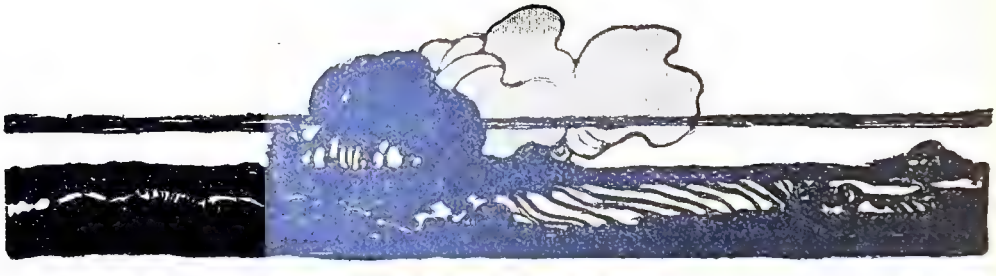
As we stand in the presence of death we have no knowledge, but always, no matter how dark the gloomy clouds hang before me, there gleams the star of hope. Let us hope, then, that it may be the morning star of eternal day. It is dawning somewhere all the time. Did you ever pause to think that this old world of ours is constantly swinging into the dawn? Down the grooves of time, flung by the hand of God, with every revolution it is dawning somewhere all the time. Let this be an illustration of our hope. Let us believe, then, that in the development of the human soul, as it swings forward toward its destiny, it is constantly swinging nearer and nearer to the sun.

And now the time has come to say good-by. The word "farewell" is the saddest in our language. And yet there are sentiments sometimes that refuse to be confined in that word. I will say, "Good-by, old man. We will try to exemplify the spirit manifested in your life in bearing the grief at our parting. Words fail me here. Let these flowers, Riley, with their petaled lips and perfumed breath, speak in beauty and fragrance the sentiments that are too tender for words. Good-by."

THERE wasn't a dry eye in the audience when Mr. Knickerbocker finished his masterly discourse. Some of those present, indeed, acted as if spellbound. Surprise at the remarkable performance of the orator was depicted on the countenances of the thoughtful among the hearers.

The coffin was carried to a motor-truck, which was to convey it to the railroad. Silently the pall-bearers, selected from the most prominent residents of the camp, took their places behind the improvised hearse. Then the funeral cortège, embracing nearly every man and woman in Rawhide, slowly wound its way down the canyon, beneath a Wintry desert sky.

At the foot of the canyon the procession halted and dispersed, while the motor-truck proceeded across the desert to the railroad station, thirty miles away, whence the body of Riley Grannan was transported to the old home in Kentucky, to be laid to rest "where the magnolia grandiflora, like white stars, glow in a firmament of green; where crystal lakes dot the greensward and the softest Summer breezes dimple the wave-lips into kisses for the lilies on the shore; where the air is resonant with the warbled melody of a thousand sweet-voiced birds and redolent of the perfume of many flowers."



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FORBIDDEN TREASURE

by Beatrix Demarest Lloyd and Esher Martin

SYNOPSIS: Mark Stuart, on a geological expedition to Iceland, finds there an American yacht with its millionaire invalid owner Mr. Lee, his daughter Nora, and his physician Dr. Berwind. At Haldr's inn Nora treats Stuart with undue haughtiness, and keen hostility arises between them. A treasure bloodily stolen by ancient Vikings from a Sicilian abbey had been cursed by the dying Abbot so that when brought to Iceland the curse made an ice-desert of a once fertile part of the island. An Icelandic family, the Olafsens, murdered the surviving Vikings and the curse falls on them. Stuart recovers an ancient bell, whose inscription concerning the treasure is deciphered by Mr. Lee. Stuart explores the desolate coast of the Vatna Jökull, where the fatal treasure is supposed to be, is left to die by his deserting crew, and is rescued by the yacht. The yacht's captain is washed overboard under suspicious circumstances, and Healy, the substitute mate, assumes command. During an unsuccessful half-serious hunt for the treasure the boat is suddenly frozen in for the Winter. Stuart learns Dr. Berwind is treating Mr. Lee for the morphin habit. Nora, after continued ill-treatment of Stuart, makes overtures of friendship. Healy gains an ugly influence over the crew. Later he makes a private search for the treasure. Mr. Lee, stealing morphin, becomes worse and makes more trouble between the crew and the others. The crew go from bad to worse, urged on by Healy and their superstitious fears over the curse laid on the treasure. Mr. Lee, crazed by morphin, murders Berwind. Stuart and Nora bury Berwind in the sulphur pool. The crew loot the yacht and attempt the vain journey overland.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE RETURN OF BILL LEVINE

FROM her closed door he turned slowly away. Then he stood and listened. Stealthy, but hurried, footsteps were descending the stairs. He walked down the corridor to meet whoever it might be and had hardly time to take his breath before he came face to face with Bill Levine.

From the man's handsome eyes flamed a drunken fury of desire. His lips leered hideously. He made as though to brush past Stuart with an overbearing stride. Mark barred his way.

"What are you doing here, Levine?" he asked sternly.

"Wot am I doin' 'ere?" The man echoed his words furiously. "Gawd, wot do you s'pose I'm after? I'm after 'er—an' I's good a right 's you?"

In a moment the two men stood glaring at each other. With a swift movement Levine snapped open the jack-knife which he carried in his hand.

"So you thought as 'ow she was goin' to be left 'ere for you!" he breathed tauntingly. "My heye, 'ow nice! But no, she comes with me—me, Willum Levine, Esquire! 'Ere, lemme past!"

The long red hair, which hung untrimmed about his head, gave his face a tigerish wildness. With the open blade shining in his hand, he hurled himself forward. Stuart barred his way. Levine raised his blade. Feinting with his right fist, Stuart caught Levine's right hand, knife and all, in his own left.

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"—— you!" hissed Levine, "drop it, will you?"

Even in the desperation of the struggle, a fear fell on Stuart lest Nora, startled by the noise, should issue from her room into the midst of this bestial fray.

The mere brutality of the combat was something that should not offend her eyes. Unmistakable in the position outside her door, he could not hope that the full meaning of the hand-to-hand struggle could escape her.

So it was in silence that he fought, for silence had become the desperate necessity of the moment. As Levine's left hand, flying to the reinforcement of the armed right which struggled helplessly in his opponent's sinewy clasp, left his body unguarded, Stuart's right hand made for the cockney's throat.

Here was no gentlemanly duel, played according to the rules of an agreeable sport. Life was at stake, life and honor, the primitive stakes for which man fights in primitive fashion. Stuart's fingers closed about his enemy's gullet, thumb digging inexorably inward and choking him into an unbreathing silence.

Without a word the men fought desperately on. Levine twisted and writhed in Stuart's powerful clasp—this way, that way, his body sought to wrench itself free, but in vain. From Stuart's left hand the slow blood dripped, but he was conscious not even of the sting. With continually diminishing powers, the steward tried to make play with his own left hand, but his fist, softened by his long years of indoor labor, fell like a child's on Stuart's hard-trained frame. His face began to turn purple. From his protruding eyes rage and baffled desire glared impotently at Stuart. But all this while, no sound, no sound but Stuart's hard breath, their balancing footfalls on the thick carpet and the faint gurgle that began to issue from the throat of Levine.

A voice came from the companion, shivering the silence like a pebble dropped into a well.

"Hi, Bill Levine!" called the voice. "Ain't ye tittivated enough?"

Seeing the man in the last extremity of suffocation, Stuart relaxed his grip. Levine sagged away from his hand like a sail from its mast. Then, as the voice came for a second time, this time reinforced with an oath, the steward rose slowly to his feet. Rubbing his throat, he drew in a long breath. Then, with a visible effort, he made as though to recover some of his lost jauntiness.

"My heye, but you must 'a' 'ad practise on that 'old!" he croaked with taunting hoarseness. "So long, my turtle doves! I wishes you joy, Gawd knows!"

He turned and staggered up the companionway, and Stuart heard his heavy steps and those of his comrade, echoing over the deck above him. He wrapped his handkerchief tightly about his bleeding hand, the while he listened to the retreating footsteps. Then he retraced his way down the corridor to Nora's door and knocked. "I think they have all gone," he called. "I am going up on deck to see."

She opened the door so unexpectedly that he had barely time to put his hand into his coat pocket. "Let me come with you," she said.

They went up on deck together silently, the only moving creatures in the deserted ship, except poor Humbug, dejectedly wandering about the wrecked and ruined cabin trying to find a tidy, comfortable place in which to rest his fastidious bones.

Levine, walking a bit unsteadily, had with Durkee but just gained the ice at the foot of the steps. Across the frozen fiord toward the gorge at its head straggled a broken caravan of the thirty-odd men who had made up the ship's company. Against the black lava beach the flutter of white fur was plainly visible.

NORA, leaning both elbows on the rail, with a little gesture which reminded Stuart of the day she had come to make friends with him, gazed out across the emptiness of ice toward the lava shore.

"It is very quiet," said Nora Lee.

But just as she spoke in the wind, which drew coldly toward them from the head of the fiord, the distant wail of a faintly-borne chorus came to their ears.

The deserters, bending under their packs, were toiling up the lava slope—their united voices, raised in the interminable strains of their favorite ballad, came thinly down the wind:

"Far, far away, I left my love-asleeping,
Sleeping far away beside the windy sea—"

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Nora took in her breath. The wind noised in the rigging. Slowly, faintly the far-away sound of singing died away. One by one the distant crew attained the height of the beach and disappeared behind the jutting rocks of the gorge. Finally even Levine and Durkee, the last of all, were on the crest of the rise. The former turned and looked back. Then, impudent to the last, waved an insolent farewell to them and disappeared.

The shore was empty. Around the fiord in which they lay rose the austere mountain peaks, with neither cry of gull nor ripple of wave to break the dry clatter of the wind.

Nora turned to Stuart. Her face was very white.

"Now," she said.

Stuart nodded. Words of encouragement, being impossible, he offered none. Slowly they went down the companion together. Within the disordered vestibule and the wildly confused saloon beyond, all was still. At the foot of the stairs, Nora halted. The calm self-possession, which the men's violence had been unable to disturb, was shivered by the approaching ordeal. Her lips wavered and her breath came in little sharp gasps as though she had been running.

"I will wait here," she said.

Stuart nodded. As he turned, she detained him sharply. "One moment," she said uncertainly. "It's odd, but I'm so afraid—I'm so afraid of what you'll find!"

Her eyes, wandering, dropped to Mark's left hand. Forgetting, he had taken it from his pocket and a crimson stain had appeared through the handkerchief he had wrapped about it. She uttered a hushed exclamation of surprise, "What have you done to your hand?" she asked.

Mark smiled at her. "I cut it a little," he said. "It doesn't amount to anything, but perhaps by and by you will help me dress it in the surgery." He knew she would be glad to do this and that it was better to treat the matter so. "Perhaps, by and by, but now, Miss Nora? Shall I go on?"

She nodded bravely and pushed him from her and stood leaning against the newel of the companionway, looking after him as he turned down the passage. A moment of silence followed, then the soft flick of a rope dropped to the floor. The doorknob rattled. "Mr. Lee!" called Stuart's voice. "Mr. Lee!"

Like a statue Nora stood. Through her mind thronged a thousand fond images of her father, of dear remembrances cherished since childhood, of the loving admiration compelled by his loyalty, his talents, his unfailing strength of soul—but now! What was the fact that it might be death waiting for her behind that silent door, compared to the fact that it was death that she must hope to find?

There was a sudden crash—the shattering impact of muscles with rending wood and iron. The blow echoed through the stillness of the yacht. Then again a crash as the shattered panels fell—then silence!

Nora listened tensely. Silence.

In that silence she had found her answer, even before Stuart, returning slowly down the passage, brought the message to her. And, raising her eyes, she read her answer again in his face, while his unwounded hand, outstretched in dumb eloquent gesture, made in the air the solemn sign of the cross.

CHAPTER XXXIX

FOUR MINUS ONE

OUT of the white mask that bore so faint a resemblance to her once rosy, dimpling face, the eyes of Nora Lee looked at him, as the eyes of poor Eurydice looked out from hell.

In the confusion of the wreckage of the once handsome cabin they stood face to face, like two forgotten creatures left behind amid the débris of the earth after the crack of doom.

She made a movement at last, gathering herself dimly, to step past him and go toward her father's room. But he had been waiting for this and now put out both hands to stop her.

"Let me make it less hard for you!" he said gently. "Let me have the happiness of sparing you what inconsiderable pain I may. The place is in great disorder from the shattering of the door. Give me a few moments only and then I will say no more."

"I will go up on deck again," she said, mechanically acquiescent. "I would like the air."

He watched her as she slowly mounted the steps and his heart ached for her in her unfathomable grief; then turned and went back toward the shattered door.

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The passage was strewn with splinters of the flying wood and these he gathered up. The broken, hanging door he lifted from its hinges and bore away. There was a curtain hanging on the inside of the doorway that should suffice.

The stateroom itself was in a slight confusion, natural enough in a sleeping-chamber but most offensive in a room of death. He stepped within and drew the curtain across the open doorway and set his face toward his task.

The dead man was lying dressed in the silken dressing-gown in which Stuart had seen his tall bent figure emerge from Berwind's door. One sleeve was pushed up slightly over the bare right arm, red even now with the irritation of the hypodermic needle.

But it was the face that most of all spoke of the change that had been wrought in this flesh during the awful night that now had passed. Gone was the irritable look of fretful suffering, gone the self-centered narrowness of line and of expression. All the old splendor of the man's nature, of which Berwind and Nora had told him and in which he could now so easily believe, had risen from those depths of disregarded soul into which it had been crushed during the months of his degrading illness and illumined his face with the strong glad beauty of high nobleness. The kingdom and the power and the glory of God's unforgetfulness had swept away the shadows of the sad mistakes and had left clear the fine record of the unpolluted soul alone.

Stuart composed the figure reverently into the calm attitude of sleep. Under his touch the disorder of the room drew back. He made no effort to change anything that naturally would be so. The room and the figure on the bed looked like the active instruments of a still living soul.

Then an unexpected sound outside came to his ears. He straightened, listened. It came from the saloon, a slow, sweeping noise as of a broom upon the floor. Wonderment in his eyes, he stepped to the door, went down the short way to the saloon hurriedly and looked about. Then with a genuine emotion that he acknowledged without shame he leaned against the doorway and said brokenly, but with a smile, "Oh, Fong—you blessed Chinaman!"

The quaint Celestial figure, in the midst of the hideous wreckage of the yacht, was quietly at work. A broom in his hands, sweeping together fallen coins and broken champagne-glasses, corks and bank-notes, the imperturbable Fong continued with "his job."

Nora was standing on the steps of the companionway. She, too, had heard the sound of some one moving about and had come down to see what it might mean.

"Fong!" she had said, in a voice very much like Stuart's own.

The Chinaman looked from one to the other and then about him at the disrupted room. A slow smile came to the surface of his face. "Bad men allee gone, leavee hell behind," he said pleasantly. He looked so drolly unconscious of his profanity, first at one and then at the other, that they laughed in spite of themselves.

THEN suddenly Nora Lee ran down to him and caught him by the shoulders. "You dear soul!" she said sadly, and yet with a commendatory emphasis. "You shall—if ever we get away from this terrible place—go back to China a rich man. God bless you for your faithful heart!"

He looked at her in young amazement. What was Fong's sweeping but a small part of "his job"?

She turned to Stuart then and came toward him in the confusion of the room. Her face lifted to his in quiet courage.

"May I go in now?" she said.

He nodded silently and stood aside. In the motionless, deserted yacht even the sound of her footsteps was plainly audible. She turned, just at the door of the passageway and held out a gentle hand to him. "Will you come with me, please?" she said.

Like two little children hand in hand they went toward the curtain of the shattered door. She drew her breath in with a sound that might in another woman have been a sob, and then put out her other hand and drew the curtain back.

A rush of stillness seemed to catch her up in its pale influence and then her voice came. In a cry of love, that held a low thrilling note of joy, she said "Why, father, father, dear!" and, loosing Stuart's hand, hurried forward to the bed.

He stayed beside the door, watching her for love of her and because she had bidden him to come; watching her as she stooped beside the motionless figure, as she bent to kiss the cold brow, as she stood looking

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down upon the face. Never until the bones of him should crumble into dust would he forget, he told himself, the sweet, proud gesture with which she turned from her contemplation of the dead, still face and motioned with the pride of an empress toward the bed. "This is my father!" were the words she said.

When he turned away from the door the conjectures and estimates and problems of life surrounded him and drew him away. The situation of a man and a Chinese boy and a young woman stranded in the ice floe on a very huge steam yacht was one which might well claim attention.

He wandered about over the deserted ship, examining everything, from their own pillaged and mutilated quarters down into the bowels of the hull where the engines lay glittering and motionless. It seemed incredible, as he moved about in these regions, that at some turning he would not come face to face with one of the crew, would not encounter one or a group of those figures that had been the familiar background of the recent weeks. Here a handful of oily waste lay just as it had dropped from the hand of the engineer. There a half-empty canvas tobacco-pouch with the strings loosely hanging lay upon a campstool quite as if the owner were about to return in an instant and complete the filling of his pipe.

A second grisly trip was yet to be made to the little store-cuddy abaft of the engine-room. With a face grown bitterly grave again, he opened the slop-chest in search of tarpaulin. Even those simple stores had been ransacked and plundered by the men, and everything was thrown about in wild confusion. But he found at last the sail-cloth, needle, sailor's palm and marline thread and with the miserable bundle made his way back into the cabin. The mere fact of having the grim duties to do a second time added double weight to the horror.

He put the materials for his sad work out of sight and then called to her. She came to him from her father's stateroom, her face quite stiff with the unatural set of the muscles. She apparently saw that he wondered whether he needed to explain his calling her, and she put up her hands to forstall his words as if she could not bear them. "I know, I know," she said. Her voice sounded quite unlike her own. His eyes could scarcely bear the pain of looking at her white, drawn face.

NORA was ready to accompany him when, his grim work done, he came out at last into the saloon. Their two white faces looked at each other with a strained and wearied sadness. He wished that she would cry—he had heard somewhere that it was better for a woman. But there was no traces of tears about the pale, thin face.

Fong had to be called at last and the silent procession made its way again to the starboard davits.

The body was made fast—they knew how to do this, too—and lowered reverently down upon the ice. Then with the same rope that had been used before, they made handles that would serve to draw the formless coffin across the fiord, and in the silence that had been so long unbroken they started forward, three abreast and one behind.

Stuart became conscious after a time of a change in Nora's demeanor; an increasing nervousness that was showing through her long unthreatened calm. And when at last they reached the well-known spot on the shingle beach she turned to him again and again as if she wanted, wanted most urgently, to speak to him yet could not frame the words. Wondering and yet unwilling to question her inopportunely, he signed Fong to take up his end of the shrouded figure and he himself bent to his task. He set his face toward the fissure in the rocks.

And then, certain at last of his intention and face to face with the immediate moment of its execution, she sprang close to him and clasped her hands heavily upon his arm. "Oh, not in that dreadful place!" she cried and the agony of her voice tore at his heart. "Not again! Not this time. Not father!"

He put his hand over hers and sought in his mind what he could say to her. Her face lifted to his was convulsed with a frantic entreaty. "I can not bear it!" she said. "Don't you remember how he turned away and shuddered and said it would be a dreadful grave?"

"There is no other way," he told her gently. "As I told you, we can not dig a grave. And a burial at sea is out of the question while the ice-floe lasts. Believe

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me, oh believe me, I am doing the best I can for him!"

A little softness came into her eyes at the vehement loyalty of his reply. But she continued to appeal to him. "I should never sleep again," she said. "He shuddered when he passed it! I can't bear to have him buried there."

"There is no place on this green earth you would not shrink from in this hour, my dear!" he said, his hands holding hers tenderly. "You have been so brave these past days; try for both our sakes to keep your colors nailed. We are passing through the darkest days that we can ever know. But this sad part, sad as it is, we shall see one day as God's greatest goodness!"

SHE flinched with the understanding of what he meant. Her hands fell away from his arm and her head sank. "You are right," she said, with difficulty. "Yes, you are right!" She stood looking down at the long, awkwardly made covering that held the figure of her father. How still he lay, he who had made her world go round! She saw suddenly the vision of their home so far away, the house with all the dear family things. He would never again live there with her. She would go back to it alone, alone!

She knelt to pray beside the long, mummy-like shroud that held him, a sharp ache growing in her throat. She knew that Stuart had drawn away, leaving her quite alone. Her hands, clasped harshly together, she pressed against her trembling, dry lips to steady them. "Our Father——" she began in a voiceless whisper, but at the beloved word the walls of her long courage wavered and went down.

"Father, father!" she sobbed and flung herself face down beside the straight and close-bound form.

At the little distance to which he had withdrawn, Stuart watched her, deeming it best not to interfere with the saving expression of her grief. It cut him to the heart to see her groping hand reach out toward the covered face of the dead man and falter with a wistful longing upon the rough, hard canvas of his shroud. She lay there, her face buried in her other arm, and the wild, first sobs of a long repressed grief shook her slender little body cruelly.

At last he could bear it no longer and he went to her. Lifting her up from the ground, he held her in one arm and she turned her face upon his shoulder as if she had been a little child and sobbed on, but more quietly. He had no thought of her in this moment that he would not have had if she had been the child she seemed to be. There was no quickening of his pulse at the dear joy of having her so in his embracing arm, her head upon his breast.

At last, the paroxysm gone, her courage strove to reassert itself and she drew herself away from his encircling sympathy and stood alone. "Forgive me," she said finally. Her voice was cut and strangled by the sobs that still lay in her heart. "I am sorry that I should have broken down. I am quite all right now again. It was only——" she made a gesture of great despair and loneliness. "I can bear it now, I think," she said.

Believing it best to act on her suggestion, Stuart motioned Fong to come. They stooped again and lifted the recumbent shape. With his face from her, Stuart did not see that Nora was walking at the dead man's side. When the pit was reached, he saw her, but she stood straightly by and it was not for him to send her away from her own father's side.

Kneeling beside the spring, he and Fong took a firm hold on the rope that was bound about and about the tarpaulin. With a slow, reverential movement they lifted it out over the creamy, boiling surface of the bubbling sulphur and lowered it.

There was a strangled cry from Nora as the heavy form sank slowly in the thick yellow mud. Then everything was very quiet. Wide, leathery ripples spread circlewise from the spot where the body had gone down. The bubbles rose again, blistering the surface and breaking into froth to swell the foam that smoked about the rim. It seemed incredible that everything about it should be so absolutely unchanged.

He led her away at last, the silent, faithful Fong following across the shingle and across the ice. Her feet seemed heavy with sheer weariness and she walked slowly as one who has crossed many miles of road. At the steps over the yacht's side he had almost to carry her upward. She seemed unable to draw her weight away from the weakness that dragged it downward.

In the companionway he walked a step below her, holding her hand and watching her anxiously. What he feared came as

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they again entered the devasted but orderly saloon. Half vaguely she looked about her at the empty place. She made a curious little gesture with both hands as if she marveled there was no one there. Then, slowly and with closing eyes, she slipped forward into the arms he flung about her and the waves of deep unconsciousness closed above her head.

CHAPTER XL

THE PRISONER IN THE ICE

ACROSS the saloon and down the long, narrow passage Stuart carried her to her chintz-hung boudoir next her sleeping-room. She lay inertly in his arms, heavily, but the man who had lifted Berwind carried her without difficulty. As he laid her upon the wide, low couch, pushing the pillows away from under her head, her eyelids fluttered and she sighed.

"It's all right," he said quietly.

One look about the room told him that there was not so much as a bottle of smelling-salts there to serve him in helping back the color to her cheeks. She was not the fainting kind, he told himself.

Glancing at her anxiously once more, he hurried away.

Fong's labor had been painstaking and well intentioned, but even he had been unable to replace the broken doors of the wine-closet. Stuart caught up a small bottle of champagne—for the crew had thought only the large ones worthy of their attention—and managed to find, among the carefully washed bits of glass that the Chinaman had collected and put away, one whole goblet. He went quickly down the passage again, looked in at the opened door and entered.

She was lying just as he had left her, but her eyes were open. She was staring at the wall in front of her and she seemed very, very tired.

Stuart drew a chair near her and sat down, pouring a half glass of the frothing wine. "I want you to drink this," he said gently.

She turned her eyes but not her head and watched him as he set the bottle down, slipped to his knees beside her and raised her head skillfully. Obediently, as her face lay against his breast, she sipped the dry yellow wine until but a last few drops remained in the bottom of the glass. He lowered her head tenderly again.

"You must take more in a few moments," he said.

She murmured something unintelligible, and her eyes returned to their staring at the wall.

He began to talk to her gently. "Poor little girl," he said, "you have had so much trouble and horror to live through and you have been so brave! Now here you are left all alone with a couple of clumsy men to take care of you. No wonder that you feel that it is too much to bear." He steered clear of too sentimental a sympathy, as too jarring an encouragement. "You will have to tell us what to do all the time, you will have to scold us when we are forgetful, you will have to boss us round to suit yourself. Only, whatever you do, you must help me to keep up your strength.

"You must not let yourself get weak and run down, because you need your strength now more than ever. There will be lots of things that you may have to help me do—oh, lots of them. One of them is to be brave." He had poured another glass of the wine and now slipped his hand beneath her head again, lifting her slowly into the clasp of his arm.

"I am not inclined to be a brave sort of fellow and yet, if I thought you were holding out it would back me up in great shape. We musn't forget that in a very few days now, just as soon as the ice breaks up—did I spill it? No, not a drop. Just as soon as the ice breaks up, we shall have to start off for Reykjavik, you, Fong and I. Think how we will need to brace one another up for that ordeal! Three in a boat, to say nothing of the dog—where is that rascal? No, just a little more. I must see a little faint pink in the cheeks—really.

"Well, you shall be the Captain of the launch and I will be the crew and Fong will be the cook We will keep close to shore and just eat up the miles between here and the port of Reykjavik. Do you suppose Humbug will be seasick? If a man can be thrown out of his equilibrium on two legs, how far can a dog—every drop gone? That's famous. You may have a pillow now."

He settled her more comfortably and threw a light blanket over her.

"Now," said he, settling in his chair, "do you feel better?"

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"Yes," she said faintly.

"Whopper number one," said Stuart. "But you will in a few moments. What I should have asked you was, 'Do you think you can keep together and not be ill?'"

"I hope so."

"Do you believe so?"

"I dare say," she answered slowly.

"There is a whole case of malt extract left out there. I believe I took one—it's only fair you should take the other. I am going to give you six glasses a day. You are to lie abed late, to come out into the saloon when you please and lie down and let me read to you. Then after luncheon you will be taken up on deck, carried up if you are feeling ill—or stubborn—and there you shall get the air. Then after dinner you shall go to bed early. All this punctuated with malt extract. In a week I shall have you as active as Little Billie."

She faintly smiled. "How good you are!" she said.

He had risen to take away the bottle and the glass. But at this he turned toward her. "Good!" he echoed. "Do you know I was looking over my past history with a critical eye myself to-day, wondering when I ever had, intentionally or inadvertently, been good enough for this."

"For this?" she questioned.

"For this reward of being permitted to serve you," he said. And he saw the faint flush of which he had spoken rising in her cheeks.

"When you feel able—remember we have had no luncheon yet, and it is four o'clock—will you come out and lie in the saloon? Call me if you feel too tired to walk and I will come for you."

She promised silently with a faint smile. But when she came to rise, faint as she found herself to be, she did not call him. She sat forward on the edge of the couch, her hands buried finger-deep in her soft brown hair, her face resting on her palms.

THE days with their fearful culmination of battle, murder and sudden death had left her as a soldier is left on the field, unable to realize the cataclysm that has cut him down or to believe quite in the testimony of his own senses.

She lifted her head heavily and caught at the wall for support. Then, slowly swaying as she walked, she went down the long narrow corridors.

Stuart saw her coming and came to meet her. She put a hand upon his arm and her weight swung upon it.

"That's first rate," he said cordially. "You are a good one to get about like this. See, Fong has prepared some toasted sardines for you—they are hot there on the soap-stone—and a cup of tea. That will tide you over till dinner-time and then we shall have something more substantial."

He led her gently to the chair she had always occupied at the head of the table and she sank down quite exhausted, resting her head back and letting her hands fall supine on the arms of the chair. Continual sharp glances he shot at her as he went on quietly talking. "I told Fong how to hunt about and collect all the malt he could find and I am going to begin on that with dinner. For the present you go scot-free, so be grateful."

She raised her head wearily and smiled again.

Stuart took up a napkin from the table, shook it out and laid it across his arm. Then drawing himself up stiffly, he assumed a professional air of servitude, which sat drolly upon his well-bred countenance, and took the cover off the soap-stone with a very creditable flourish considering the fact that it was merely an inverted soup-plate, the silver top having gone the way of the rest of the yacht's fittings.

"Fish from the fountain of Truth, madam," he said, with a great air. "Tea from the Flowery Land and biscuits by Fong. Shall I serve it, please?"

She was about to reply to his nonsense bravely, when quite to his horror she bent forward as if in the toils of a great pain, and hid her face in her hands. "Oh, sit down with me, sit down!" she moaned. "Oh, those empty chairs!"

"Curse me for an ass!" said Stuart inwardly, but with violence. He dropped into the chair near hers and laid his hand upon her arm. "This won't do, fair lady, this won't do," he said tenderly. "That case of malt will have to be opened at once, I fear me. Lift up your head, Miss Nora. You can not imagine what I suffer when I see you in grief, but when I see that it is I who made the grief more poignant, I am like to die."

She lifted her face obediently and met his own bent close to hers. The nearness of her beauty, the dependence of her trust-

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ful look went into his veins like a wine and sang in his head drunkenly. For no reason but that of his honor could he at that moment have held himself from taking her close to him and keeping her so. The confession glowed in his eyes toward her and the sharpness of his longing was such that it was with the sound of almost a sob that he caught himself back from her perilous sweetness.

HER dependence upon him did not grow less in the days that followed, for her bodily weakness increased and persevered and though he felt it was not a thing to be marvelled at, he grew so nervously anxious about her that he would lie awake all night, his door ajar, apprehensive and alert. The prostration had one beneficent side which he came at last to appreciate. As her vitality and mental activity were dulled, so was her capacity for suffering and she endured, for the most part, the crushing grief and loneliness in a heavy languor.

Day after day as she lay on the cushioned seat of the saloon, Stuart sitting beside her, reading aloud, she would fall asleep in a soft childish way and lie unconscious for hours. He rejoiced in this. He knew it to be the one sure way of Nature to restore her worn tissues and exhausted mind, and besides that it gave him an opportunity to watch and learn and love her face as he had never been able to do before.

Slowly, with infinite labor, the tireless source of all things built again in the ruins of her young strength. He had sat beside her, ministering to her, doling out her tonic with a mock seriousness and distracting her mind, as the inapt phrase has it, with reading from all the books the yacht's library contained those most likely to avoid unsettling thoughts.

It was on one of these times when, as he sat reading to himself, fancying her asleep, she opened her eyes and lay watching him. In her quaint little way she was wondering just what about him it was that she liked so well. Was it his thick, light hair and clear skin? No, it certainly was not merely because he was handsome in a frank, clean way. Nor was it because he had been so faithfully her friend, so patient a nurse, so indefatigable a servant. He was without fear and without reproach, yet that was not why. She watched his hand turn a page and fall again.

And then quite unaccountably, as she felt a strange impulse to reach out her hand and touch his own, the revelation came to her. Her eyes closed again in a sheer terror and amazement, while wave after wave of red, each deeper than the last, surged over her face.

She lay in a silence, a motionlessness, which had it not been for the insurgent color in her cheek might have seemed like the deathly stillness of a swoon. It had come to her in the little wistful impulse to touch his hand. She liked him so very well, not for his braveness or his pleasant eyes, but just because she loved him!

Then, when unexpectedly his voice came to her, she trembled with a wonder that she had not known it long ago.

"I was wondering," said Stuart looking up rather suddenly from his book, "if it would not do you good to take a little walk now? You surely feel strong enough? Your color is excellent to-day."

The color became more excellent at this praise, but he did not notice. She welcomed the idea. The excuse of going to her room for her furs, to be for a moment away from the disconcertion of those gray-blue eyes, was quite ably seconded by a not unnatural willingness to end her long imprisonment. She sat up, and then rose. "Oh, gladly!" she said.

So long had they been in their bondage to the Vatna that now the goblin country had no wonder for their eyes. They saw no marvel in the wild scene that stretched before them as they walked lazily toward the moraine. The peaks of the Bull and the truncated Sigurda and the other unknown hills behind were to them as familiar a skyline as the skyscrapers of Manhattan, and the cold had become to them as their native climate.

Then to their sudden amazement, as they had put quite a distance between themselves and the yacht, they heard behind them a great cry repeated and repeated even before they could turn. It was Fong Charley grotesquely propelling himself across the ice in his junk slippers, his loose garments flapping miserably in the freezing air. Behind him ran Humbug, who, on the cry, took it up, barking lustily.

"Well, what now? said Stuart resignedly.

The Chinaman came scrambling up,

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a mixture of reproach and relief and fear upon his yellow face. "You leavee Fong?" he gasped, terror and exercise having robbed him of his better breaths. "You leavee Fong and dog pidgen? You go away leavee Fong?"

The man's fear was so very real and his stoicism up till now had been so very splendid that Stuart slapped the hand of a friend down upon his shoulder, shaking his head vigorously to make it more emphatic. "No leavee Fong, no, no! Go walkee, come home soon,"

The wide, slant-eyed face looked from one to the other. "Fong walkee too?"

Stuart glanced at Nora, who smiled and nodded. "Poor soul, yes, let him come."

Stuart smiled again at the recovering Fong. "Allee light," he said in sly imitation of the Celestial's own sing-song tone, "walk along takee dog pidgen."

He turned again to Nora, laughing as the restored Chinaman started on ahead of them with Humbug racing along more energetically than his wont in the tremulous hope of warmth. "Poor Fong, he evidently had a bad quarter of an hour. But I am afraid you have walked quite enough for the first day."

"Oh, don't turn back yet. Let me walk just to the moraine and then I will go back."

He acquiesced, though he watched her closely for any sign of failing strength and he walked slowly as if his own inertia were to blame for the slow pace they made. Fong and Humbug went on always ahead, always farther ahead, so that, not knowing the plan of turning back, they forged on over the moraine and were up the glacier before Stuart and Nora had reached the first boulders.

When at last she came to the promised turning-point she sat down on a large fragment of volcanic stone to rest. "Call Fong and tell him we are going no farther," she said. "He will have another attack of fright and will expect the Vatna to pick him up between its thumb and first finger and eat him alive."

Stuart put his hands to his mouth and called "Oh—oh Fong!" He paused a moment and then called again "Oh—Fong!"

An answering hail came in an instant or two from the invisible creature and presently he appeared running, stumbling and flapping along like an animated mass of banners. He was waving his arms. And from the first moment he beheld them he began calling, but they could not understand.

Nora gave a little nervous laugh. "Oh, what now?" she quoted. "Oh, it can't be that anything has happened to Humbug?" she said sharply, getting to her feet. Stuart put up his hands and called, "Dog allee light? Dog pidgen no hurtee?"

"Allee light!" came as the only intelligent part of the reply.

FONG, scrambling nearer, made out to reach them with his strong falsetto voice. "Baby——" was all they could make out of his gibberish, for his original tongue was at once to the fore and he hurled far more Chinese at them than pidgen English. "'Baby' and 'bone,' is all I get," said Stuart, "Baby and bone—what on earth do you make of that?"

"Very little, I grant you," said Nora. "Wouldn't the easiest way be to go and see? I am really a little anxious about Humbug."

"But you can't climb all the way over the moraine!" he protested.

"Can't I, indeed?" she retorted, flinging up her pretty head. "Just watch me and see what you think about it. For what have I been meekly taking malt extract all these weeks?"

It was arduous climbing for a woman but just nursed back from physical prostration, but her interest in the procedure stimulated her. Every now and then she paused to draw breath and to exclaim again, "What can he have found, do you suppose?"

Just over the bend in the moraine in the northern corner of the glacier they came upon Humbug, dancing on three petulant legs with interest. Fong Charley, a few steps away, was on his knees in a puddle of water on the surface of the ice, bending over a depression in the glacier. Nora hurried forward even a step or two in advance of Stuart and then stooped beside the kneeling Chinaman with a little horrified cry.

"It's a baby," she said, "the skeleton of a little baby!"

Glad as he would have been to save her any such piteous sight, Stuart was too late to interpose. The girl stood motionless and he came to a stand beside her. "It's too bad," he said gently. "I am sorry

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you came to see this. Probably——" He bent down and then in an instant was on his knees beside Fong. His breath came in a gasp.

"It's not a baby!" he cried suddenly, looking up into her face as she leaned over him. "It's a monkey—Miss Nora, a *monkey!*"

"A monkey——" she repeated vaguely.

"A monkey—what am I saying? It is *the* monkey. Look here!"

He pointed, his hand trembling, to the fanciful gold ornaments that encircled the bones of all four wrists. "Don't you remember the story, how he came ashore on the shoulder of the shipwrecked Viking? And there's the tail down in the ice! He's being slowly forced upward to the surface. Things are brought up that way."

"Good heavens!" said the girl in a soft whisper, looking almost reverently down on the bones of the little creature so many centuries dead.

But Stuart suddenly jumped to his feet and caught her hands. "But do you see what it means?" he cried madly. "It means that this must be the right place after all! We were not mistaken. This is the place where the treasure was buried! And if it is—as it must be—then, by the living Jingo, we are going to find that treasure, you and Fong and I!"

CHAPTER XLI

THE LURE OF THE VIKING'S SECRET

FONG had just begun to set the table for dinner, and Nora, with a weary sigh, had closed her book and risen to go to her stateroom to dress, when Mark came running down the companionway. She looked around in startled surprise, for it was long since she had heard so light and eager a step echoing through those corridors. He came down, his face alight and his eyes sparkling. Before she could speak he blurted out:

"Miss Nora, when those brutes blew open the safe the other day," he motioned toward the heavy Kermanshah rugs with which Fong had tried to cover the damaged wall, "didn't you say they must have taken their explosives from Dr. Berwind's stores?"

She nodded, wincing as always at the mention of poor Berwind's name.

"Did he have much? Do you suppose they used it all?" said Stuart anxiously.

"Why, I don't know," she answered rather slowly. "There was dynamite and gunpowder, but as to how much—I remember a keg of the powder being brought aboard, because Durkee made such a fuss about carrying it down to the surgery. What do you want it for, Mr. Stuart? Are you going geologizing?"

Stuart laughed. The awakening of her curiosity and consequent forgetfulness of the dreadful cloud under which they lived was precisely one of the objects he had in view.

"I will tell you more in a moment," he replied gaily, and was off before the words were quite out of his mouth, leaving an impression behind him of exciting possibilities. Nora stood looking after him as he hurried down the corridor. Sauntering as ever serenely about the table, Fong went on with "his job."

The girl waited for him to return, still with her finger in the book she had been reading. Despite the fact that a whole month had gone in which she might have accustomed herself to the strange intimacy of the life they led together, she was not always able to overcome a certain feeling of self-consciousness. The two of them, with only this queer Celestial who seemed not to be a being like themselves at all, were as wholly dependent upon each other for human intercourse as the first man and the first woman. So often in their confidential life their dual solitude took on the outward semblance of a honeymoon. She was learning to turn to him with the gentle dependence of a happy wife. And she found a strange new delight in being cared for by this man whom until a few weeks ago she had persisted in regarding as an impertinent intruder.

In a few moments he came back and flung his cap boyishly from him into the cushioned seat of a chair.

"There is plenty of stuff there, I think!" he said excitedly. "There's almost the whole keg of giant powder left, about a hundred pounds of the stuff, I should say, and——"

"But, please, what do you want it for?" she asked, breaking in on his catalog. "I am dying of curiosity. Please tell me now!"

"I've been evolving a scientific theory, madam," said he, bowing with mock dignity.

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"How delightful," said Nora.

"May I sit down?" said he, smiling.

"Oh, if you please. If it is as formal as all this."

He took the chair near her and she sat down. "It takes a man to drive one mad with suspense!"

"To begin with, we made a discovery yesterday. Now that you have had time to reflect upon it, have you made any deductions?"

SHE wrinkled her pretty brows at him. "I am so stupid," she said. "You must not expect too much of me. Except that it was proof that this must be the identical spot where the treasure was buried, I have deduced nothing. It must be that, for I don't believe there was ever another monkey brought to these shores and certainly not one with gold bracelets."

"Exactly!" said Stuart, smiling at her. "Proof positive! So much for the truth of the story. We know now that this is the very place. What comes next?"

Her brows were still drawn together as if the effort it cost her to keep up with his masculine wits was very great. The unconscious flattery was very sweet. "What comes next?" she repeated. "Why, that although this is the place and although that red spot you found on Sigurda must be the Red Rock of Half, the promontory and the cave have been swept clean off like a plum sticking from a loaf of cake."

Stuart burst out laughing and brought his hand down in an appreciative slam upon his knee. "I must not expect too much of you!" he said, paraphrasing her words. "Why you have arrived at once at the very conclusion that I have after a day of hard thought. The promontory had been bitten off, like a plum from a cake and the place licked clean by the great monster that has devoured all the youth and Summer of the Vatna."

"You mean the glacier?" she said half hesitatingly.

"I do indeed. There it is, one of those vast and resistless shapes which in early days we know to have molded the surface of our globe. There it moves, like the last of that monstrous company. Slow like the mills of God himself. But it grinds on, Miss Nora, through the years, with a motion so gradual that no human eye can possibly perceive it, yet so real that no object standing in its course has the faintest chance of resisting it!"

"But I do not understand," she said, leaning forward eagerly. "When you found the red place, you remember, it was far above you as you stood on the surface of the ice."

"That is just the point, my dear lady, and here is just the explanation. Under the Summer months of sunlight, the glacier shrinks many feet in thickness. Now, in July, it is at it lowest level. Then in the Winter months it swells again ten or fifteen feet."

Nora's eyes sparkled. "Then, of course, the glacier bit off the plum on Christmas Day, let us say!"

"On a Christmas many years ago," he answered. "But listen, Miss Nora; this is the exciting part of it. We found the monkey just above the terminal moraine, didn't we? That gave us the distance that the glacier has progressed in its course since the destruction of the cave. From the size and shape of this glacier and the climatic conditions surrounding it, it would be my guess that its progress would be ten or ten and a half feet in a year.

"The little monkey has marched a mile from the Red Rock, which would, at our rate, make him about five hundred years on the way. And as the Olafsens are supposed to have buried their treasure one thousand years ago, that would give us five hundred years for the formation of the glacier and the general blasting of the verdant Vatna."

"Oh!" cried Nora, clasping her hands. "It fits together perfectly!"

Stuart ran his hand over his thick hair and laughed almost tremulously. His excitement was obvious in spite of the careful way he had explained to her each step of the theory.

"It fits together perfectly!" he echoed. "And the result of all the dovetailing of these bits of knowledge is that, if the monkey has been carried safely on by the huge monster in its maw, why not, Miss Nora—why not——"

She jumped to her feet. "The treasure?" she almost whispered. "The treasure—in the ice, you mean?"

He rose, too, facing her. "I believe it on my soul!" he said.

She stared at him for a moment and then began to laugh excitedly. "Well, but—

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well, but—what are you going to do? You really believe—Oh, Mr. Stuart—tell me—I am so excited——"

"I am going to dynamite the glacier!" he said eagerly, laughing like herself.

"Oh, oh!" she said. She had seized his hands in her forgetfulness of everything but the wonderful possibilities before them. Then with a wrench she tore herself loose and started on a light run for her room. "Get the things! I'll put on my furs. We will go now!"

"But your dinner!"

"Oh, bother the dinner!" she called. "We can have dinner any day. Let's make a convenience just for once of this wearisome daylight."

Quite as willing as she to forego the food in the exhilaration of the moment, he obeyed her. Catching up his cap and ramming it into his pocket, he went back into the surgery calling to Fong to come to him. The calm Celestial obeyed the summons, appearing at the door.

"No eatee dinner, Fong," said Stuart over his shoulder, as he knelt on the floor beside the box of dynamite-sticks. "Gettee coat. Carry pidgen. Biggee devil bang!"

Fong received the orders without any change of expression. "Allee light," he suavely made reply and departed to wrap himself up.

CHAPTER XLII

THE START OF THE TREASURE-HUNT

IT HAD required some small resolution for Stuart to overcome the creeping human weakness which assailed him at every turn in this deserted ship and to enter the surgery which opened out of poor Berwind's cabin.

But once inside the place where the interest of the exciting affair was paramount in his mind, all gloomy vapors vanished and he worked rapidly, collecting the necessary impedimenta of the expedition.

The preparation took Stuart longer than he had thought. First the ice-axes, the tinted glasses to protect their eyes against the glare, the life-rope, the hobnailed boots and when these means of reaching the desired spot were completed, there remained the weapons of attack upon the glacier itself.

Besides a small keg, black, copper-bound and wrenched open at the end by the mutineers, but still full almost to the brim with the coarse black grains, there was a tin box labeled neatly in the Doctor's familiar hand and filled with dynamite sticks, like twelve-inch candles. These blue, paper-covered objects, each with its envelope of cotton wool and winding wire, brought a delighted glistening to Stuart's eyes.

"And to think that the day those rascals blew open the safe I cursed out the whim that had brought these dangerous explosives on board!" he said to himself.

Fong returning, dressed in heavy sweaters and coats and looking more absurdly impassive than ever in the strange garb, eyed the candles with a knowing eye.

"File-clackers?" he inquired in his high sing-song.

"Exactly so," said Stuart. "You are to carry these on deck. No droppee pidgen!" He turned and repeated it impressively, "No droppee! Biggee devil inside killee Fong!"

Fong Charley nodded in philosophical obedience and took the fearsome packet tenderly in his arms. A few moments later saw the explosives, closely wrapped in tarpaulin, stacked ready near the steps on the upper deck.

And when Stuart, returning in eager haste from a second exploration among the assorted equipment of less dangerous materials, came on deck again, he found Nora waiting for him beside the rail. Humbug, miserable as ever, sat nervously at her feet.

The remembrance of recent griefs was for the moment faded from her eyes. From her rosy young face shone no thought except the fleeting joy of coming adventure, as she turned excitedly toward the approaching Stuart.

"Mr. Stuart, what have you there? Are you going into the hardware business?"

"I've been down in the breathing, burning heart of the ship, Miss Lee," he responded cheerfully. "Down among the silent engines and the cold boilers, to the little corner where our faithful slave of the lamp keeps the steam heat always alive. From that mysterious region I have brought the tools of our enterprise. See! A stoker's poker, six feet long, for drilling the glacier; a neat iron shovel, for handling the broken ice; a small battery, detached from our electrical plant and a few hundred feet of wire, how else should we set off the

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spark to our fuse? And lastly, here's a cord that will do for leading Humbug. Will you fasten it to his collar, Miss Lee?"

With an appreciative glance, Nora met Stuart's smile. "You forget nothing, Mr. Stuart—in the outset of your great enterprise, you remember a wretched little dog! Here, Humbug, thank the kind gentleman. Here, Humbug—here! Stand still, puppy!"

"Fasten it firm, Miss Nora! We can't risk having him go nosing among our charge and gnawing our dynamite-sticks—any more than we can leave him behind to bark his heart out in one of the cabins. Here, where is that marline?"

WHILE Stuart was speaking he had rolled his tools, together with the keg of powder, into a compact bundle of tarpaulin. To this bundle he attached a double line by which, after he and Fong had lowered the bulky package over the rail, the muscular little Chinaman was to drag it over the ice to their destination at the head of the fiord.

So much done, they descended the steps and started across the ice in single file. First Fong, bent to his improvised harness, dragging his clanking load in unquestioning passivity. Next Nora, with Humbug beside her, walking alone; separated, despite her indignant protest, by fifty feet of space from Stuart and the dangerous package of high explosives which, with the little electric battery, he carried over the glassy surface of the frozen fiord.

In spite of the glowing hopes awakened by their fantastic enterprise, there was probably in the minds of both Stuart and Nora the recollection of that day when the same wild errand had drawn them over the surface of this same sheet of water, in company with their friends who had shared their hopes. And so intimately was their recollection bound up with the present enterprise that it seemed to the living survivors that they trod almost in the footsteps of the dead.

Though how horribly the destination to which they were bound must speak to Nora of recent catastrophes Stuart had hardly realized till, arriving at the head of the fiord, he laid his dangerous burdens on the ice and approached the girl.

"Now, Miss Nora," he cried with cheerfulness so resolute as to be almost overdone, "now we formulate our plan of campaign. My idea is to climb to the top of the glacier——"

"No!" said Nora quickly. "Not that way—not the way we went before!"

With a barely perceptible gesture she pointed toward the jagged fissure in the cliff below Sigurda, by which on that first day they had scaled to the table-land above. In Nora's white face, however, and in the thin drawn constriction of her lips, Stuart read the recollection of other occasions—of that day when, bearing something between them, they had come to that fissure beneath the cliffs and gone away alone and empty handed; and of that second time they had come to the same unhallowed spot on the same errand. Had that bubbling vat of sulphur performed its hideous office? Or were those bodies which had once been so dear to them all still tossed in slow unending circles in that hole toward which their footsteps now approached?

To proceed up that fissure to the table-land of Sigurda and thence down upon the glacier's surface by the former route was to pass inevitably by the goblin-like charnel which even in remembrance was a spot not to be faced. And the thought of what, staring up from the slowly seething bubbles of pale brown, might suddenly show itself to them——

Stuart spoke to Nora with gentleness. "No, Miss Nora, not that way! It would be dangerous with such a burden to climb Sigurda. We will take the easier way up over the moraine." He pointed to it, obviously to distract her attention, and with a brave control she turned to look in the direction indicated by his gesture.

Directly before them, above the lava beach on whose margin they stood, rose the jumbled desert of rough volcanic stones which formed the moraine of the glacier. Beyond, filling in the narrow defile between the precipitous Sigurda and the twisted black spires of the Bull, the glacier itself sloped steadily upward toward the Red Rock of Half and the volcanic peaks of the Vatna, which towered beyond.

From the water level whence they surveyed it, it appeared as rooted and as immovable a thing as the mountains themselves that hemmed it in. Impossible to believe that the fixed white Colossus was moving toward them!

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"You see," said Stuart briefly as he pointed to the high-peaked rocks, trophies of its own resistless progress, that the glacier bore before it, "you see for yourself what this mass of ice has brought from the valley—has carried down beyond a doubt. So why not, I ask you——"

They looked at each other. In that moment of primitive excitement, of thrilling possibility, all thought was lost of past grief, of present and future perplexities. The glacier, the treasure, became the urgent and immediate thought in both their minds.

"My idea," said Stuart quickly, "is that the place toward which we direct our operations is this northern shoulder of the glacier, immediately about the moraine." He hesitated a moment, then with a boyish laugh of excitement, "Of course the whole idea is probably pure moonshine!"

CHAPTER XLIII

THE FIRST EXPLOSION

BUT madly visionary as the hope may have been, Stuart had begun to cherish it passionately, to put it next another hope quite, it would seem, as visionary and as mad. He had long since given himself up utterly to loving Nora Lee, but never once had he permitted himself to forget that she was the heiress of an immense fortune and he an ambitious but penniless student. And from the profession of husband of a wealthy woman his stomach revolted in manly independence.

But, so wild was the dream that he could win her love, the finding of a material treasure seemed not impossible. So that he had thought vastly more about it than his silence in all these weeks would have tended to indicate.

What if his calculations and schemes really enabled him to find the treasure—a treasure not mythical but actual and convertible into the cash of modern civilization!

On the other hand, granting always that this wild dream of Viking gold came true, the outpouring of unlimited wealth into their laps might be the mere irony of fate. What if they were destined to die here in this savage wilderness, like the friends who on their last expedition had shared their hopes with them? There the matter became lost in conjecture too wild to be recorded.

He looked at her as she stood beside him, a ray of the low-hung sun striking red light from her brown hair pushed forward by her close, fur cap. The icy-cold breeze off the great glacier desert struck them full in the face and whipped the blood into her cheeks. As she stood thus silent, everything seemed very still. A thin, black, spiral smoke rose wavering from the black peak of a distant volcano, but except for that insentient movement against the sky the white solitudes about them were bound in the rigid strictures of the frost.

"We are to go over the moraine, then," she said. "Will you lead on, Captain? Or perhaps I should call you President—President of the Vatna Viking Gold Explosion Company!"

Even though it was a jest, his face fell. "Oh, it does sound wild and impossible!" he said and at his tone she turned to him in some surprise.

"Do you care so much?" she asked.

He looked at her. It seemed as if she must know all the thoughts that had pressed upon him, when they had all begun and ended in her own fair self. And indeed, perhaps she did understand somewhat of that look she saw in his face, for she turned away in a very evident confusion and merely repeated, "Will you lead on, then?"

It was a half-hour before Stuart, crawling with painful caution over the treacherous foothold afforded by the glacier, reached its icy eminence with his dangerous burden. With careful touch he laid it down in a little snowy hollow twenty feet from the girl. Then, standing beside her on the rough ice that topped the glacier, he looked about him.

In spite of the blood-red sunlight the air blew biting cold. Nora, stamping first one little moccasined foot and then the other, turned from the solitary waste of mountains upon which she had been gazing to the preparations which were busily making before her. "How do you begin, Mr. Stuart?" she asked with deep respect.

Stuart glanced up at her as she stood rosy and glowing before him, her eyes shining with the exhilaration of cold and excitement. The exacting employment of the moment, however, prevented him from taking his usual adequate note of

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her beauty. He was kneeling on the ice, turning the long poker with the rotary motion of a drill between his hands. Fong, perched on the gunpowder-keg, battered at the drill with well-directed blows of his iron shovel. Slowly the iron bar plowed its way into the icy floor. . .

THE six feet of iron drill were lost in the ice before Stuart spoke in answer to Nora's question, when, plucking the drill from the little heap of snow that had collected at the mouth of the hole, he rose to his feet. He gave a few directions to Fong, who turned and hurried obediently down the rough surface of the moraine.

Then turning to the waiting girl, he said "The best way, I think, is to blast, little by little, this portion of the glacier which we calculate to be our likeliest. One stick of dynamite will be as much of a charge as we dare risk for the first time." As he spoke, he was opening the iron box and tenderly unwrapping one of the cotton-enveloped sticks which lay beneath. With a cautious hand Stuart unwound the wire. Nora shivered as she regarded him.

"To think," she said slowly, "that it's death itself, no less, that innocent blue sausage that you roll so indifferently between your fingers!"

Stuart smiled at her abstractedly as he continued his employment. Unwinding the copper wire down to the nub, which was securely fastened about the dynamite-stick, he lowered it cautiously, inch by inch, into the deep-drilled hole prepared for it. The free end of the wire he secured to the surface of the ice; then turning to meet the silent Fong, who labored back over the surface of the moraine, he took from the Chinaman's hand the tarpaulin bundle which he carried.

"What's that?" demanded Nora curiously.

"This, Miss Nora, is sand—volcanic sand for tamping the charge—so! We pour in the sand little by little—little by little." Very cautiously Stuart sifted the dark coarse grains down the narrow mouth of the hole. "Otherwise, you see, the explosion would expend all its force upward. A business-like blasting, not fireworks, is what we are after, you know!"

Slowly the sand sifted in—more sand and more. Then opening his leather drinking-cup, Stuart dipped water from one of the shallow pools which the July sun had melted despite the cold wind, on the surface of the glacier and poured it into the drill-hole after the sand. Again he repeated the process and again.

"What now?" asked Nora breathlessly.

"Now," replied Mark, "to connect our wiring!"

The small battery from the yacht, unwrapped from its tarpaulin, lay ready beside him. With skillful touch Mark unwound the end of its wire from the reel, twisted it and joined it securely with the hub of wire projecting from the hole where the charge was buried.

"It's all ready," asked Nora, "all ready but to press the button?"

Stuart laughed. "Yes, but don't worry! I'm not going to push over the switch yet. Not till this keg of powder and this box of dynamite are removed to shelter there beneath that projecting ledge across yonder and we ourselves are snugly beyond reach of the flying ice-cakes. Come, Fong, pick up shovel—pick up big devil—sabe?"

Two trips from the drill-hole to the protecting ledge of Sigurda were necessary before gunpowder, dynamite and tools were safely stored beyond danger from the coming concussion. Then, with added precaution, Stuart betook himself and his party to a sheltering ravine on the opposite side of the glacier, farthest from the coming explosion. He walked slowly, carrying his battery. Behind him Fong unwound the wire from his reel and guided it along the ice.

From above them rose the jagged pinnacles of the Bull. At the base of the lowering precipice which fronted them, the lava-rock had formed itself into fantastic columns and wild, black stalagmites.

Among the distorted caverns thus formed, shelter was easily found behind a large boulder. Stuart, stepping first into the semi-obscurity of the shallow and icy cave, laid his battery on the ground. Then returning to the entrance, he guided Nora's footsteps over the slippery surface of the rock.

"Come in, Fong; here, Miss Nora, here, Humbug! We are all ready, I think?"

Nora was trembling with excitement. Even the little Chinaman though hardly understanding the object of all these prepa-

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rations, showed an interest which almost approached animation.

"Wile come stlaight, pushee button pidgen, big joss fly up—muchee noise—all lightee!" he said, with proud consciousness of his own intelligence and the prominent part he was playing, as he straightened the final coil of wire.

Stuart stepped toward Nora. She was trembling and her eyes shone like stars through the twilight of the cave.

"Miss Lee," he said quietly, "will you make the connection, please? Here—this little switch is to be pushed open from left to right, to join the copper nub to which the wiring is attached. Make a little prayer for good luck, please, and let her go!"

Breathless, Nora raised her eyes, smiling to his face. Breathless, she touched the switchboard, pushed the tiny flange into place. The spark leaped from wire to wire. Out in the glacier before them there was a sharp crack like that of musketry.

Through the low opening of their sheltering cave they could see a glistening white fountain of snow, reddened with the uncanny glow of the midnight sun. The stream shot into the air—the detonation echoed sharply from wall to wall of the defile. The rose-red fountain wavered and sank again. The echoing crackle trailed away among the hills. Nora laughed a little excited peal as she turned back to Stuart.

"Fireworks!" she cried. "Nothing so terrible after all. And now, who knows what we shall find? Come, Mr. Stuart, come!"

With eyes that fiercely questioned the unseen fissure that waited for them, the two hurried stumblingly over the icy hummocks toward the scene of the explosion.

CHAPTER XLIV

FAILURE AND REMEDY

THE explosion had made a cup-shaped depression in the glacier, perhaps twenty feet in diameter and filled nearly to the brim with glistening white snow. Stuart and Nora stood beside it, he looking into it with a frown, she watching his face. All about them for a radius of thirty feet or more the surface of the ice was covered with a feathery mask as of new-fallen flakes.

"I thought," said Nora timidly at last, "that the ice would be all split into great transparent cakes, quarried out clean, so that we could go searching among them. But this hole that runs down who knows how deep and all filled with this snow stuff, how can we ever find out what there is in that, Mr. Stuart?"

Stuart laughed grimly. Though this was his first experiment in the action of dynamite upon a mass of ice, his expectations had not unnaturally been the same as that expressed by the girl.

"If seven maids with seven mops swept it for half a year," he replied with a ghastly attemp at jocularity, but paused, knitting his brows. Nora gazed at him with deep concern in her beautiful eyes as he surveyed the baffling enigma before him.

"The trouble is," he said finally, "that the ice, you see, is soft. The explosive pulverizes it completely and the result is what you see."

He stood silently gazing into the pit. Fong, who with Humbug on the leash, had gradually crept nearer, bent and looked in. "Biggee devil file-clacker," he said with a pleased and childish smile.

Nora looked at him absently and turned to Stuart. "Isn't there some other way of getting at it?" she said. "Would less of the explosive do?"

He was biting his lip and did not seem to hear her. With the instinctive respect of the woman for the man abstracted in thought, she became silent and stood respectfully beside him. At last he began slowly to cross the glacier toward Sigurda, his eyes continually turning from side to side, sharply scrutinizing the lay of the ice.

Nora walked near him, watching the expression of his face. Fong and the dog, alike unconcerned in the ultimate outcome of the affair, wandered along and looked at nothing.

Finally Stuart came to an unexpected stand on the side of a deep crevasse in the ice which split the glacier up and down. She paused beside him and waited.

The crevasse, which was perhaps a yard across at its greatest width, went down to unmeasured depths of cold translucent green beneath their feet. Its course ran diagonally from below Sigurda, at a point perhaps two hundred feet back from the moraine itself. The whole northern corner of the glacier, on the side of the moraine, was thus split off in form of a large triangle, nearly a sixteenth of a mile in breadth and probably a hundred feet at its greatest depth.

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"By Jove now!" said Stuart between his teeth, very slowly and very softly. But dubious as the tone was, Nora caught at the suggestion of a new hope.

"What?" she cried, abruptly.

He remained a moment motionless, then turned on her a smiling face in which a new inspiration showed.

"BY HEAVENS, here goes one more effort to make the Leviathan disgorge! We will hoist him with his own petard. Here's the hole which he himself has drilled ready for our charge. We will pour in all the powder on the ship. We will take the risk and cry Forth Fortune! And we'll make a blast that will rend this corner of the glacier from here to the moraine! What do you say, Miss Nora?"

Nora clasped her hands in a sudden reaction of delight. "Good!" she said in almost childish excitement. "We will blow the thing to bits! But—but," her face fell again, "won't it be just the same story all over again, only worse? Will an acre of snowdrift be any better than twenty feet of it?"

"That's just it!" said Stuart. "I have an idea it won't be a snowdrift. Listen. I believe I told you the dynamite formed probably too rapid and violent an explosive for so soft a material as ice. But combined with the slower and more gradual agent——"

"The giant-powder?" said Nora excitedly.

He nodded. "It's guesswork, of course," he said a bit uncertainly, "but I believe that if we lowered the whole business into the crevasse—there's enough there to blow up Manhattan Island—it will do the trick. In there it will go deep enough for the blast to expend its force where it will do the most good, from the very bottom of the glacier upward!" His eyes were alight again and turned continually to her lovely, animated face as he spoke.

But looking at her, his face grew grave. "It will be a terror—no little fountain like the last one, but something appalling. Suppose anything should happen to you?"

She began scornfully to retort upon him, but he persisted. "But we are contemplating something that so far as I know no human being has ever tried. I can't predict its effect on this huge body of ice. We may be deafened with the detonation —we may be buried under falling pieces of the very cliffs themselves!"

Nora met his glance steadily. "But also, you understand, I am not ignorant of the extremely precarious value attached to our lives at this moment! If the yacht were floating there in open water with a full complement of crew to navigate us back to New York——" She paused, smiling. Then her brows knitted. "No," she cried heartily, "not even then! You will think me very childish," she said, "but I want to do this thing!" The emphasis she put into the words drew his eyes again to her face and he saw it, to his surprise, hardened into lines of ruthlessness. "I want to strike a blow in revenge. I have hated this terrible place, Oh, how I have hated it! And how it would please me to see a great wound torn in its heartless breast!"

"You little savage!" he said quietly.

"Even if we don't succeed in laying our hands upon the treasure, at least we leave our mark upon the horrible wilderness. We leave a part at least of it in ruins behind us!"

FOR a moment they stood surveying each other. "As you wish, Miss Nora," he answered. "After all, I probably exaggerate the possible danger of such a discharge. If I were alone, I should have not one moment's qualm. But when your safety is concerned, I own I am no better than a coward."

Simple as the words were, they were the nearest approach he had ever made to a confession of his overwhelming passion for her. And even in the preoccupation of the moment, the sense of how closely he had approached that forbidden topic confused him.

He turned away from her. "Fong!" he called. As the Chinese boy turned and came toward them, Stuart leaped the crevasse. "The Rubicon!" he said, half laughing and half serious.

This time the preparations were more laborious and on a far more elaborate scale. Nora, quiet and indefatigable, worked side by side with the men. The keg of giant-powder was rolled from its cave down over the surface of the glacier to the crevasse which waited for it.

Step by step the dynamite was carried down over the same treacherous footing. The great iron poker from the yacht, planted for half its length in the ice, served

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as a pivotal point of support from which the explosives, securely lashed, were lowered to their destination. Slowly and with infinite precaution this part of the business was accomplished.

An incautious run of rope, a careless swing of the suspended burden against the irregular sides of the crevasse and the consequence could be nothing but disaster. Finally, the explosives lay safely together in the unseen depths of the green ice chasm, connected with its surface only by the line used to lower them and the electric wiring destined to serve as a fuse.

Then, with delicate touch, the charge was tamped. Nora and the Chinaman, trudging tirelessly up and down over the rough of the moraine with the unhappy Humbug behind them, carried the coarse volcanic sand to Stuart, lying flat upon the ice.

This part of the work, with the slow-poured water which followed it, took more than two hours in itself. The midnight sun, dipping behind the hills, had already swung its rosy disk upward toward the east before Mark rose to his feet. His face was flushed from long stooping, his limbs staggered stiffly under him. Nora, on the contrary, was very pale, and her hazel eyes were shadowed with fatigue.

From them, however, the light of her eagerness blazed undiminished, as she watched Stuart, with skillful touch, go through the now familiar process of connecting the wire fuse with the copper reel of his battery.

"We go to our shelter," said Stuart quietly. "Come, Fong!"

In silence the little procession wound its way across the glacier to its southern edge. Stuart, walking behind Nora, who was leading her dog, crept step by step with his battery in his hands. Fong, walking last, unwound the rippling lengths of wire. Their shadows, flung by the mounting sun over the rosy surface of the snow, moved slim and oblique beside him.

CHAPTER XLV

RECOVERED SOIL

BEFORE the twisted black stalagmites which formed the base of the Bull mountain they finally paused. Stuart, passing by their former place of shelter, laid his battery cautiously down and made sharp investigations of the ground. One aperture after another he rejected as insufficiently sheltered or doubtfully solid as to rock roof or walls.

Finally a deep fissure in the face of the cliff, narrow and high, seemed to satisfy his exacting eye. He pounded the walls and the floor with his iron drill. "This place seems solid," he said. "These cracks in these rocks, I should say, run back no more than five or six inches at the farthest. The fissure runs at such an angle that I fancy we will have the best acoustics to lessen the reverberation. Though, if it were not for the danger of falling rocks, I should prefer that you were out in the open."

He had taken out of his pocket a small handful of the cotton wool that had been wrapped about the sticks of dynamite. "Please stop your ears up well," he said, giving her part of it. "Here, Fong!" He tossed some to the boy. Fong took it, cramming it into his ears in imitation of Stuart's movements and then crept away to crouch silently in the farthest nook of the ravine.

Stuart brought in the battery and stood behind it in the mouth of the cavern. For a moment in the dim twilight of their shelter there was no sound except their hurried breathing. Nora, holding her wriggling dog closely in her arms, strove to close his very involved ears with the merciful cotton.

"Are you ready?" called Stuart.

Their shuddering silence gave his answer. He raised his hand. Then bringing it down, pushed the tiny flange of metal across the switchboard till it stood connected.

There was a preliminary rattle as of a far-away battle, then an instant's silence pregnant with shrinking suspense. Then a mighty roar!

The explosion was more than a mere unbearable bellow of stupendous noise. Not only with their ears but with every nerve of their bodies forced into service as reluctant tympana, the listeners were conscious of that fierce aerial compact.

The air was shattered with the rending detonation, the icy floor swayed and rocked beneath their feet. Echoing back and forth between the high walls of the defile, that gigantic crash went

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rolling on in seemingly unendurable reverberation.

Fong threw himself on his face. Humbug, breaking desperately from Nora's arms, rushed to the inner blackness of the cave, his stump of a tail pressed down into even greater insignificance.

Nora, gasping for breath like one who has been under water, was trembling in every nerve.

Would the air whose quiet foundations they had so ruthlessly assailed never give the blessed gift of silence? Above them, all around them, it seemed as though all the navies of the world were hurling their combined broadsides upon the Vatna.

Through the savage heights and unfathomable depths of the wild country around them the booms went echoing back and forth, first in sharply distinctive crashes, then merged together in one long roll as of tropical thunder.

The time, though probably no more than a minute at the utmost, seemed drawn to the length of the Arctic day itself before the roar sank to a faint diminuendo among the distant hills. Far, far away it went echoing still—the patter of rain-drops, the falling of a rose-leaf.

Then silence.

It seemed a living entity, soft and reassuring like a friendly hand. Nora, pulling the cotton from her ears, smiled vaguely at Stuart.

"You are quite unhurt?" he shouted anxiously. It was a curious tribute to the recent disturbance of their senses that to neither of them did his loud tones sound unnatural. And Nora was equally unconscious whether she spoke in a scream or in the softest whispers as she replied, "It didn't hurt me a bit, though—oh, dear, wasn't it awful?"

"It was!" he assented. He uncorked his own ears and shook his head vigorously, as one might shake an obstinate clock that refused to go. "That was the Fourth of July, wasn't it? By Jove, look at Fong! And he comes from the land of fire-crackers too!"

THE little Chinaman lay prone on his face, muttering endlessly into his clenched hands. From the remote shadows of the cave the little bull terrier's eyes glowed like fiery beacons of terror itself.

But Nora was in no mood to waste time upon these two terrified creatures, unhurt as she could see them to be. She caught Stuart by the arm. "Oh, let us go and see what has happened! I can't wait, I can't wait!"

He smiled at her, almost laughing with excitement. "Come, then!" he said. They took hands and started forth.

Through the body of the glacier over which they hurried, the explosion had opened innumerable new fissures and crevasses. It was on the other northern corner of the glacier, between Sigurda and the moraine, that the blast had expended the main force of its strength.

On the ridge of the icy precipice fully a hundred feet high, Mark and Nora stood looking down upon an empty gap. It was the corner formerly occupied by the vast triangular fragment of the glacier, toward which the blast had been specially directed.

Now it was gone. The front of the glacier, wrecked and empty, had the grotesque appearance of a toothless mouth. Nora flung her head up with a strangely triumphant laugh.

But Stuart, almost trembling, looked downward toward the wild green sea of icy garments which strewed the slope beneath them. "Do you think," he asked, "you can manage to climb down there?"

Nora looked down. Immediately beneath them the glacier had been broken away in jagged fragments which lay piled like a terrace. Looking down, they could see the black cliff of Sigurda exposed to its very base. "Surely yes!" she cried.

"Wait a moment," said Stuart again. "We must take every precaution. These ice-boulders are ticklish footing! Here, we will rope ourselves all together. I am glad that I thought to bring this extra line."

In a few moments the life-rope was securely knotted about the middle of each. Stuart, taking his barbed stick in his hand, sprang with a secure step of his hobnailed shoes upon the tilted ice-cake nearest below him.

Nora followed, holding to the hand he stretched out to her. Fong gingerly came after, with a complaining Humbug under his arm. Slowly, with infinite precaution, they worked their way downward once or twice on very uncertain footing,

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trusting entirely to Stuart's staff and rope to save them from any serious fall.

At last they reached the level of what had once been the moraine, where they stood for a moment, panting with the exertion of the descent. Above them towered the sheer crystal precipice of the rent glacier. All about them, completely covering the black rocky bank of the terminal stone heaps, was piled an endless wilderness of shattered ice.

Great green blocks were strewn in jagged confusion beneath their feet. Huge fragments, split into blocks with clean knife-like edges, appeared here like tall transparent fortifications, while farther down the slope a glimmering obelisk of ice, tilted endwise by the pressure at its base, lifted its glittering pinnacle to catch the prismatic rays of the upward swinging sun.

"The gaiety, the light, the brilliancy of it!" said Nora in a low tone. "And yet it is the dead, ancient heart of the glacier that we have cut open. It is like walking into a dead, unburied city of the past, with cold, white houses."

Mark smiled at her. "Pompeii gave up its treasure!" he said.

His words were calm, but his voice broke in his throat. Nora cast an odd little glance of questioning upon him.

"Big Joss knockee pidgen ice all hell!" said Fong in worried accents.

"Never mind that, Fong," said Stuart, "There is frappéd gold inside this ice-chest and we want it. At least——" he broke off and looked about him, "at least I hope there is, but I confess I don't see any as yet."

HE spoke lightly, but his jaw was set in rigid purpose as he turned away.

His heart beat with a dull pain as he thought how childishly he had set his hopes on the old fairy-story.

He would wake on the morrow the same penniless student, as far as ever removed from all chance of happiness and a great deal farther from the hopes of it.

In the moment of his inattention Nora had slipped away from him and swung herself down into a space that promised an outward opening. Suddenly her voice came to him from behind a glistening battlement of ice, calling him and ringing with an excitement that made his heart leap.

"Mr. Stuart! Oh, Mr. Stuart! Come here, come here!"

She was on her hands and knees, bending eagerly forward. As he dropped beside her she lifted for one instant a face to his, so illumined by a dazzling happiness that he could scarcely look upon her and not catch her close to him. "Oh—oh——" was all she could articulate.

Catching his breath as he bent forward and saw what she had found, he thrust his hand down through the chinks of ice to something that glittered below. The other hand followed. Breathless, tense, in a moment more he had wrenched open the aperture. He raised something heavily in his two hands.

"See here!" he said quietly.

Between his hands he held toward her a large crumpled ball of gold, about the size of a grapefruit. From one side of the yellow lump winked the soft brilliancy of a large roughly cut diamond!

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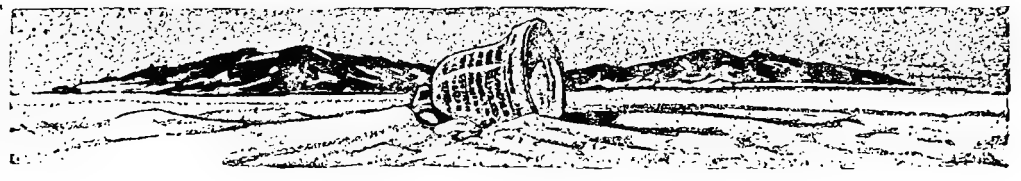

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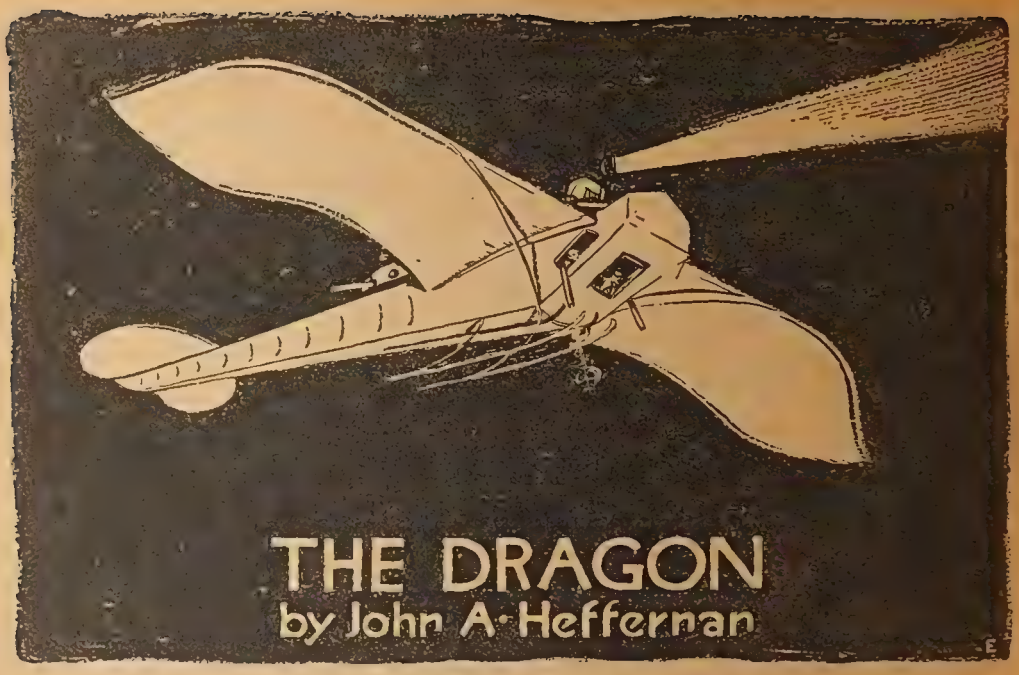

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THE wise world smiled a comprehending and tolerant smile when it was announced that President Wall had appointed Guy Lollard a delegate to the International Peace Conference. This peace movement was a millionaire's hobby, anyhow; it had a fine social flavor and it was quite fitting that the President should select as our representative a gentleman whose private means would support the dignity of the United States among the commissioners of the participating Powers.

Mr. Lollard, a slender, elegant man of fashion with smooth hair parted in the middle, gentle eyes and pleasant but not striking features, belonged to the idle rich. If you knew him, you would like his open face, and even his laughing complaint that "serious business made his head ache" would engage you by its frankness. But the American people, outside his own set, knew very little of him and, had the peace movement been regarded as important at all, there would have been some outcry against such an appointment. As things were, there were only a few joking paragraphs in the Democratic newspapers.

The Congress turned out to be a brilliant thing socially and intellectually. The foremost orators and philanthropists of the world had addressed the delegates and the blessings of peace had been extolled by the eminent of every race. Lollard had remained silent during the sessions.

It was only after the Committee on Resolutions had presented its report and the Chair had put the accompanying resolution before the body, that the American delegate rose in his place and Archduke Charles of Austria bowed courteously and recognized the "Representative of the United States."

"I move, Mr. President," said Mr. Lollard in his even, drawling voice, "that the resolution just presented be amended by the addition of the following clause:

"The President is empowered hereby to appoint a committee of three members of this body, who shall devise a plan of disarmament based upon an alliance of the Caucasian or white nations; such alliance to support a sufficent military force, both land and naval, to police the world and prevent the disturbance of its peace by any single nation or combination of nations."

A deep hush fell upon the assemblage. The Archduke, glittering with decorations, stood irresolute, his eyes seeking instinc-

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tively the desk at which sat the Eastern delegates.

His Excellency, Tu-Wang, rose, his dark eyes troubled. A magnificent Mandarin's diamond blazed upon his brow. The Chinaman looked from face to face but did not speak.

Suddenly the silence was broken by an exuberant "Hoch! Hoch!" and Prince Frederick, the son and representative of the Kaiser, sprang to his feet, his plumed helmet up-flung. On the heels of his cry, as the thunder-peal follows the lightning-flash, came the wild cheers of the white races, the cheers in which were expressed the growing suspicion of China's power and motives so long diplomatically concealed. It had broken through, the ancient, indestructible spirit of battle, the old, wild war-cry, and it rang out, high and proud there in the hall consecrated to peace.

When it died away, Lollard went on, a little flustered, but smiling pleasantly:

"Mr. President, no nation loves peace more than my nation. But resolutions have been adopted year after year and the cost of the military establishments has gone up. Some of my colleagues will supply the statistics—they make my head ache. But they have gone up, so you see this resolution business does not accomplish so very much. We must make peace a law, and behind our law there must be the authority of power! Now we have each nation sustaining an immense military establishment, whose weight oppresses the people. Our idea is to have one such establishment sustained by all the white nations.

"And here, without the slightest desire to offend the distinguished gentlemen representing the Mongolian Powers, or the great and enlightened people for whom they speak here, I shall ask permission to explain the reason I limit the proposed alliance to the white Powers. We of the West have about fought out our quarrels. Behind us is the same history, the same faith; among us is an understanding almost thorough. *We know each other.* On the other hand, you of the East have your own history and your own faith that are foreign to us. *We do not know you, yet!* We hope to know you better in the future, but, until that times comes——"

He paused, the cheering broke out again and Lollard smiled in some confusion and at last sat down. The Archduke raised his hand, the uproar subsided.

"Is the amendment seconded?" he asked.

"Germany seconds!" came the reply from the floor.

"England seconds!"

"France seconds!"

It was a tumult.

"The proposed amendment of the Committee on Resolutions is then before the Congress, it having been moved by the United States and seconded by Germany," announced the President. "The Secretary will call the roll."

Austria gave assent from the Chair, Argentina, Belgium, Bolivia and Bulgaria followed with affirmative votes in quick succession and then came a deep hush as the voice of Sir Graham Macpherson, the Secretary, rolled out the inquiry,

"Does the Representative of China agree?"

Tu-Wang stood up in his place. Grave and impassive, his great diamond gleaming, he faced the men of the white races.

"The Representative of China agrees," he said.

THUS was born the Occidental Alliance. For half a decade it policed the world and blessings flowed from it. Military budgets were cut everywhere and industry, relieved of an incubus, stretched itself and stood upright.

Only the great Asiatic mystery threatened the universal peace. It was not an open threat, for since the day upon which Tu-Wang spoke China's agreement to the Lollard clause the Eastern Empire had maintained relations of amity with its Western neighbors. Its messages to the sister Powers were heavy, as with the odor of spices, with assurances of esteem and good will. But in the State Departments of the Western nations there was still suspicion, for the great arsenals in the heart of the Flowery Land were known to be busy day and night. Every few months saw a new warship added to the navy of the Dragon, and a new flock to the birds of war that held the Chinese sky.

Smiling, inscrutable, China, acquiescent in the peace program of the Western Powers, built engines of war without cessation. And of late there had been a feeling in the European capitals and in

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America that conditions were approaching a climax, a feeling that was intense in the official family of the American President.

II

SO STOOD things at eleven o'clock on the night of November 23, 1955. At that hour on that night three Secretaries gathered in the office of the Secretary of the Interior. They were Lollard, now Secretary of War; Ray, Secretary of State, small and side-whiskered, dapper and diplomatic, and Walden, the splendid old cavalry commander with his snow-white hair, broad, smooth brow, clear eyes and eagle's beak.

"What do you think, General?" Lollard asked, turning to the Secretary of the Interior. "Can this last much longer? The Chinese tax-rate is now so high that there is barely a living margin for the coolie. The Emperor must know the danger-point; he has arrived at the stage at which he must have war or revolt!"

"Now, now!" protested Ray, shaking his head, "you are a terrible alarmist, Lollard. You do not understand these people. The coolie will never rebel and his master knows that, you can bet. And, besides that, the Imperial Government has no desire to try conclusions with your Alliance, Lollard. Why, only to-day, Ah-Song assured me of the Emperor's earnest desire for a continuance of the conditions that now bless the world."

"Yes," said Lollard, but there was no note of credulity in his voice.

General Walden walked to the window and looked out into the night. Washington lay beneath him, its white glare beating up moistly against the overhanging gloom. Into the shaft of light that shot out from the office window spiral whirls of white flakes came reeling like drunken wraiths out of the darkness. Against the window-pane the Secretary of the Interior tapped thoughtfully with his finger-tips. When he turned again to his colleagues, his face was very grave.

"It's a very serious business to begin a struggle without some aggressive move on their part," he said. "It may be that the Emperor has no intention of aggression, but can we take the chance? It is no undisciplined horde that China will put into the field when the *dies iræ* comes; and what of the white civilization when that yellow flood breaks out? Shall we sit still while the Empire makes ready for the conflict? It is hard to say what to do. Oh, if we could only understand the way these yellow scamps think!"

"I understand perfectly——" the Secretary of State began, but Walden broke in impatiently,

"Oh, yes, Ray, you think you know them, but they got the Burmese markets closed to you without much trouble!"

Ray's face flushed slightly, but he made no answer. Lollard looked again at the sheets of paper in his hand.

"This is the gage," he said at last, throwing the sheets on the table. "Here lies their budget; this is their population table. Compare them and tell me how can they stand it. It's too close to the bursting-point!"

"What are they doing with that big fleet in Tonkin?" Walden asked suddenly, swinging around upon the State Secretary.

The latter looked at him blankly.

"Tonkin?" he questioned.

"Yes, Tonkin!" the General answered. "Twenty-five steel turtle-backs float in the gulf there under the old wizened Mok-Hi, and I'll bet my State there are as many winged destroyers nestling within call."

Ray came to life with a start. Alert and business-like was his voice when he next addressed Walden.

"That is very serious, if true, Mr. Secretary," he said. "Where did you get that?"

Walden strode to a wall safe and took a blue wireless from its recess. He tossed it to the Secretary of State. Ray grasped it and, spreading it out, read it.

"The man?" he said sharply, his finger resting on the signature "B." "Do you know him? Is he reliable?"

"That's what worries me," Walden answered. "Since Beiling died, this fellow has been acting as Calhoun's agent, but I don't know him and, as you see, he says he got the word from a merchant flyer carrying stuff between Melbourne and Odessa. Your men should know about it."

Again the face of the Secretary of State reddened, but he answered frankly, "That is true, General; they should, but they don't. You know the Emperor has closed the Gulf of Tonkin and I haven't been able to get a man past the line. The last poor

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fellow was caught and God knows what they did to him. He was a good man, too!"

"Would you mind my sending Calhoun?" Walden ventured.

"Not at all!" Ray answered heartily. "Do not misunderstand me, Walden; I think you are both on the wrong track, but this is too big a thing to be in doubt about. I want to know more than either of you, perhaps, whether that story is true. I can't find out. If you can, do it, by all means!"

WALDEN tapped a push-button on his desk and the three men sat in silence until the door opened and the Chief of the United States Aerial Police entered the room.

Walter Calhoun was in his forty-first year, a slim and sinewy man whose sallow skin was rather tightly drawn over his high-bred features and smooth, dome-like forehead. His head was bald in the middle, his hair and mustache were jet black, the latter just a thin line above his finely chiselled lips. The eyes were brown and placid, a mild look of inquiry illuminating them.

"Take a chair, Walter," said General Walden.

"Anything I can do for you, Mr. Secretary?" he asked.

"We have been discussing the Tonkin matter, Walter," said the Secretary of the Interior. "Mr. Ray doubts the accuracy of our information, and, as for that, I am not so cock-sure about it. What do you think?"

Calhoun paused a minute before he spoke. It was a habit of his. He was as slow to speak as he was quick to act. Ray bit his lip impatiently, but Lollard merely watched the face of the sky-policeman, a little smile on his lips.

"My opinion," Calhoun said at last, "would be of no value; my knowledge would be worth something."

"It would be invaluable just now, not only to us, but to our country, if not to civilization!" Lollard cut in sharply.

Again there was a period of silence while Calhoun gazed at the ceiling.

"I could be in Tonkin in five days," he said presently.

"Tonkin is within the forbidden zone," Ray interposed.

Calhoun turned his peaceful eyes upon his own superior.

"You know what that means," said Walden gravely. "A stranger caught within the lines could make no appeal to his home Government. Indeed his Government would have to disown the act and leave him to his fate. He would be absolutely at the mercy of the Chinese Government, and mercy is not one of their cardinal virtues. The man who undertakes the job faces not only the death they contrive out there but the ignominy of having been caught in the act of disobeying the positive orders of his own country."

Again there was a hush. Calhoun walked to the window, as his chief had done a short time before, and gazed out into the white flurries. When he faced them again he walked up to Walden and said,

"I desire leave of absence for a month for Lieutenant Dennis Gilhooly and myself. Also, I desire your permission to use *D*-12 for my private purposes. I shall communicate with the Department if I learn anything of value."

Walden reached out and clasped the hand of his subordinate. A sudden brilliant, transfiguring smile glorified the usually unimpressive countenance of the Secretary of War.

"You're the goods!" he cried in warm approbation. "I want to know you better."

The Chief of the Sky Police acknowledged the compliment with a grave inclination of his head and, after shaking hands with the three Departmental Chiefs, walked out of the office.

III

AN HOUR later a bird of light, with widespread wings of gloom, sprang up from the roof of the Interior Building and into the swirling snow-flakes. Two blades of white light flashed out from its head, like luminous antennæ, reaching out into the night. It was the United States Aerial Police Biplane *D*-12, the crack flyer of the service. With his hand upon the wheel, as he settled himself in the right-hand seat of the duplex saddle, was Walter Calhoun, while beside him his blue-eyed young Irish lieutenant tested the induction gage with his wet finger and clicked the lock of the receiving chamber of the nickel mitrailleuse that

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ran like a silver bar across the airship's bow.

The wire-glass walls of the lozenge-shaped car were closed tight, but the interior was still cold and the snow gathered on the glass and impeded the vision, so Denny next turned his attention to the circulating system and, admitting the warm air from the engine to the pipes that ran around the floor, he soon had the little compartment comfortable while the snow ran in rivulets from the heated glass.

"How many shells did you ship, Denny?" Calhoun asked.

"Two cases," the lieutenant answered. "We have six boxes of grub-pills, an extra set of electric repeaters and twenty spare rounds of repeater cartridges. It ought to be enough."

Calhoun nodded. The way was a lonely one. There was not the constant streaking of the sky with the red and green jewels of port and starboard and the white bow searches and yellow tail-lamps that makes brilliant the heavens on a pleasant night; only those sky travelers were afloat whose business compelled them to face the Wintry blast as well as the Summer zephyr. Now and then the white beams and red and green dots of these substantial machines would cross the vision of the sky-policemen and occasionally the searchlight, streaming out ahead, would discover the shining body and bat-like wings of a big passenger-carrier bound for the capital.

Calhoun kept the *D*-12 headed northeast and the glimmer and glow of village and town passed underneath them as they steadily winged it for New York. Between Washington and Baltimore and again between Baltimore and Philadelphia, the Chief was saluted by two patrolmen of his own service riding the night with the red crescent of the Department ashine at the bow. The cheery tick-tick of the wireless key-board as their salutations came in he answered briefly.

The airmen had a hearty dinner in New York that night, for there was a long sea-journey before them, during which they would have to subsist upon the nutritious but hardly satisfying "grub-pellets." For water, during the seventy-two hours between New York and Southampton, they would, of course, draw upon the atmospheric moisture, using the old-fashioned absorbent sponges then in common use.

They ran out from under the snow-storm, as they shot eastward from New York about midnight. The air was so clear under the cold sky and brilliant starlight that Long Island Sound outlined itself distinctly, and for miles astern the white wake of the two-day boats rushing into port could be seen in the dark waters.

Gilhooly stood the first watch, Calhoun shifting the wheel to him across the transverse rod, as he lowered the back of his saddle and raised the foot-rests in order to turn in in comfort. When he awoke they were alone on the ocean in a steel-blue day of bitter cold, but their little glass-enclosed chamber sheltered them from the bitter chill. The gage showed a rarity of electricity in the atmosphere, and Calhoun connected up three additional high-power magnetos before he swallowed his grub-pills and took the wheel from Gilhooly. The Irishman reclined in his saddle but his blue eyes did not close.

"What's the job, Chief?" he asked. "Another Chink pirate?"

Calhoun shook his head.

"Only half right, Denny. Case of Chinks, but no pirate."

"What, then?" the lieutenant queried.

"We're not policemen at all for this job, my boy. We're on the business of the State Department."

"Ah!" Denny sat up, his blue eyes gleaming.

"Our little job," Calhoun said with his quiet, grave smile, "is to cross the line of Tonkin and find out what lies inside. The Secretary has a report that twenty-five turtle-backs flying the Chinese flag are lying there. That's too close to the Philippines for comfort and if the tale is true it means the greatest fight the world has ever seen, for our people will not stand it."

"And we're to let 'em know?" asked Denny.

"Yes," said his Chief. "We're to let them know."

IV

IN THE little garden of the Café Estados Unidos, in the city of Manila, a strange, misshapen Chinese sat at a round table, eating cakes and sipping tea. Despite the fact that he was a hunchback and that the garments he wore were simple in material and neutral

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in color, he arrested and held attention. At him, rather than at his tall, grave fellow countryman who sat beside him, magnificent in blouse and trousers of peacock blue and the black turban, in the brow of which shown the diamond of his order, the two other occupants of the garden cast their curious glances.

For his nose was hooked like the beak of an eagle, his forehead rose majestically high and bold from stormy brows, and deep in the caverns underneath those brows his black eyes flashed, full of fire. His tremendous shoulders seemed even broader than they really were, because of his deformity, and the forearm and wrist, that showed as the silken sleeve fell back loosely from them, were remarkable for their strength. In the man's face there was great dignity, a consciousness of power and pride that would have marked him out among men anywhere, and, when he stood up and strode a few paces back and forth beside the table, there was a kingly grace in the stride that banished the thought of his crooked back.

His companion was Tu-Wang, the well-known Chinese historian and statesman who, as delegate of China at the International Peace Conference, had signed, on behalf of his imperial master, the agreement upon which was based the Occidental Alliance.

Three tables removed from the Chinese sat a couple of men of the Western peoples. They were Walter Calhoun and Dennis Gilhooly. Although they seemed to pay but little heed to the two Chinese, there was not a gesture or a play of feature on the part of the Orientals that escaped their alert observation. They betrayed none of this in their manner, however.

Gilhooly was describing a new accelerator recently placed on the market, and Calhoun was nodding his head or making intelligent comment from time to time. Occasionally the Chinese glanced at them, but it was only the glance of casual interest. In their own tongue, however, they carried on a conversation which deeply concerned the two Americans.

"I know it is he, the dark one, Highness," Tu-Wang exclaimed. "I have seen him in Washington; he is of the secret service, although not of the State Department, of the American Government. What brings him here just now?"

The man addressed as "Highness" laughed.

"Your nerves are getting upset, my friend," he said banteringly. "He is probably on a holiday and has come abroad to see strange sights. By the splendid sun, we shall show him some strange ones soon, dwells he here or far away! We are nearly ready."

"Nearly, Highness, but yet not ready. The work is too important to risk anything by a premature revelation. We must be patient."

"Patient!" The hunchback struck the table a blow that cracked the wood. "I hate the word—I hear it so much! I am ready now for the whole world-full of pale fools. Fear not, Excellency, the day of our people is dawning! The day of the cross is over. This time it will be no Mahomet to do but half of the work. When I have done my work, the work will be all done! The world is smaller now."

"Caution, Highness! Not yet are these islands thine."

The hunchback laughed quietly.

"Patience and caution are thy whole vocabulary," he said. "Thou art fearful of the shadow that the sun throws at thy feet. Come, let us speak to the strangers. Let us ask them what they do here."

Tu-Wang stretched out a restraining hand, but the hunchback waved him aside and walked over to the table at which Calhoun and Gilhooly sat. A charming smile flashed over his features as he bowed before them and his tone was gracious.

"What does Mr. Calhoun so far from home?" he asked.

Denny's eyelids quivered, but his chief simply looked up in grave surprise.

"You have the advantage," he said.

"Aye, that is true," the hunchback assented. "I was only an attaché of our legation when I was in Washington and you were pointed out to me as the great detective of the sky. But my friend here, you surely know him. He was the Emperor's Ambassador at your capital."

"Yes," Calhoun said calmly, "I know his Excellency Tu-Wang."

The Mandarin had joined them and he smilingly introduced his fellow countryman.

"Mr. Calhoun," he said, "this is Mr. Lao-Chang, a very wealthy noble of our country."

Mr. Lao-Chang laughed gaily.

"Always he dwells on my wealth," he

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said, sitting down at the table with the Americans. "Never will he tell you that I am a dreamer and a poet, so that I must tell you myself. Ha, your friend, he, too, is a dreamer; I see it in the dance of his eye!"

"This is Lieutenant Gilhooly," Calhoun said simply.

"You dream, Lieutenant—tell me your dream!" the hunchback said, his eyes full of laughter. "Tell me your dreams of your country's freedom and your country's greatness among the great countries of the world. For you are Irish; is it not so?"

Denny grinned.

"My father and mother were Irish," he answered, "but I was born in a place called little old New York."

The Oriental looked puzzled. "'Little'?" he said, "New York is not little. And 'old' and 'new'?" His brow cleared. "Oh, it's one of your Western jokes; the paradox you call it?"

"Perhaps I call it that," Denny laughed back at him, "but if I do, it's when I'm talking in my sleep."

"Ah, then, if in your sleep, it is the dream!" said Lao-Chang, his wonderful smile flashing forth again. "I love to dream, to dream of my race as a proud and powerful and dominant race, as were the Romans once in your half of the world; to dream of the deeds that were done when the East and the West crossed swords in the days before men became too effeminate to fight!"

CALHOUN caught the quick, searching look the Chinese turned upon him as he said this, but he did not betray the fact that he caught it.

"Ours is a busy life in police work," he said quietly, while Denny kept his peace. "We have little time to dream."

"It is because you live dreams," the hunchback answered quickly. "The life of the hawk on the wing night and day seeking battle and spoil. Ah, American, you are fortunate indeed! It is a life for a man to live."

"It is humdrum enough," answered the Chief of the Sky Police. "Sometimes a pirate ship gives us a little excitement, but the air lanes are for the most part safe enough; few of the dangerous criminals seek spoils above the house-tops."

"But then," said Lao-Chang eagerly, "there must be other work that you do for your Government—work that deals with the affairs of nations?"

"We are in the Interior Department," Calhoun replied. "The State Department attends to work of that kind."

The hunchback stood up and fixed his great flashing eyes upon those of the American.

"I know the signs of a man," he said, a grave note under the bantering surface of his voice, "and a wish of my heart just now is that we lived in a man's age when there was work for a man's hands on the hilt of his sword." He laughed out, a rich, gay laugh. "Let us make an engagement, my friend, you and I. One of those fantastic engagements that can never be fulfilled. Let us pledge our faith now and clasp hands upon it, that you in your airship and I in mine will ride a tilt high in the blue heavens, as did your forefathers on their great chargers in the days when the Caucasian was worthy of his supremacy, if ever it shall happen in our life term that the East shall face the West in battle array and the flag of the Dragon shall be raised for the empire of the world against the banners of the Cross! Ha! thus your Richard of England fought with Saladin under the walls of Acre."

What was it that throbbed suddenly in the usually calm breast of the sky-policeman and sent the hot blood surging to his brain? Was it a drop of the blood of some old crusading ancestor fired by a familiar challenge? Whatever it was, it drove the American to his feet and his hand shot forward to meet the outstretched and open palm of the Oriental.

"On the faith of a Christian!" he cried, his brown eyes gleaming.

The hunchback flung his splendid head up proudly.

"On the truth of a Manchu chief!" he answered, wringing the outstretched hand.

For a space they stood thus in silence and then the gay laugh of the Oriental broke out as he spun around upon his astounded companion.

"Come, friend Tu," he said, "we must part with these agreeable gentlemen." And before they could realize it, he had bowed before them courteously and was walking beside the tall Mandarin out the garden gate. The latter turned upon the hunchback a look of deep reproach.

"Nay, chide me not, Old Sir Careful,"

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the hunchback laughed. "It was a good morning's sport. There was the true mettle there, and we could no more meet without the sparks flying than could flint striking upon steel. As for what is in your mind, have no fear. They have long suspected, but they know no more now than they did before. Only our friend the Hawk will wonder what kind of a madman Tu-Wang chooses for a companion."

Back in the garden Calhoun gazed at his speechless lieutenant.

"Denny," he said, "who is the Emperor of China?"

"Kaow!" answered Denny.

"And how is he called?"

"Kaow the Magnificent!"

"How else?"

The lieutenant hesitated. Then a long, low whistle came from his lips.

"It can not be!" he cried.

"As sure as you sit before me it is!" Calhoun replied. "In the middle of the twentieth century I have accepted the gage of battle from Kaow the Hunchback!"

V

A MONTH had slipped by, and what lay within the gulf of Tonkin was still a mystery to Walter Calhoun and his companion. Twenty times they had tried to cross the forbidden line only to veer off as a flock of airships appeared in their path. From all sides the Chinese Commander, the tough old sea-dog Mok-Hi, guarded what lay behind the islands of the estuary. Foiled in every attempt to cross the line, Calhoun still hung on like a bulldog, making his headquarters at Manila and writing numerous cablegrams to Walden urging the reinforcement of the Philippine garrison.

Notwithstanding his earnestness and the vigorous backing his advice received from his departmental chief and from Lollard in Washington, the Government at home was dilatory. Ray feared that a show of force might precipitate matters and bring on a war which diplomacy could avoid, and Ray had the President's ear, not only because of the close friendship between the two, but also because of the immense financial interests that approved the Secretary of State and applauded his well-known pacific policy.

The only result of Calhoun's pleading was the dispatch to Luzon of a single battleship from the European fleet of the Occidental Alliance, an absurd thing in the face of the force China was reported to have locked up in the waters behind Hanai Island.

The Chief of the Sky Police waited impatiently the coming of the night of the twenty-fourth of December. The sky had been a heavy gray all the afternoon and he hoped for a black night. Black it was when it fell at last, so black that *D*-12 was scarcely distinguishable as she slipped out of the hangar and soared like a somber shadow into the upper air. Without a light burning and with Denny bending forward in his saddle, the night-glasses strapped to his forehead, Calhoun steered a northwest course, his jaw set and his heart determined to learn Mok-Hi's secret or leave his bones in Tonkin. Dark as the night was, but little air was stirring, and the great bat winged it steadily at a level of five hundred feet above the inky China Sea.

The perfect machinery of the Government flyer ran noiselessly and the silence of the sea and the sky was so intense that neither man spoke, each desperately intent upon the task in hand. It was a long journey before the greater density of the darkness below them indicated that they were over Hanai, and a glow of lights betrayed the village on its northern edge. Beyond Hanai clustered the numerous small islands among which Calhoun expected to discover that for which he sought.

Calhoun's heart beat high as he left the dim shore-line of Hanai in his wake and his spirit exulted within him, for now he was inside the forbidden zone. None of the Chinese flyers had intercepted him; his path to the Archipelago lay straight ahead.

Seemingly the vigilance of the Dragon slept. Only one fear the sky adventurer had now, and that was that the muffled beat of his propeller blades upon the air would betray him. To overcome this he resolved upon a desperate expedient. Soaring almost straight up until he was twenty-five hundred feet above the level of the dark waters, he turned off his power and began to volplane to the lower levels. It was the acme of the airman's craft, this beautiful and delicate balancing which kept him in constant motion with hardly the loss of a foot in a hundred in altitude.

Lower and lower he sank in the sweep

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of those mighty circles, his eyes and those of his lieutenant straining to pierce the darkness below. Still sweeping around, hardly two hundred feet now from the surface, he caught a quick breath as his vision distinguished a dark, cigar-shaped blur underneath. At the very tip of it there was a faint white glow. It came from an uncovered hatch, and Calhoun breathed "One!" into the ears of his companion. So low were they that the air beneath them could sustain the widespread black wings not much longer, and, as Calhoun feared to alarm the Chinese by turning his power on, he sank quietly upon an island.

Strapping their electric repeaters to their sides the chief and his lieutenant stepped out upon the soil and cautiously made their way to the shore. There was no sign of human habitation on the isle, but not five hundred yards from them was another islet from which came the sound of voices. Denny slipped his clothing from him without a word and disappeared in the water. Alone on the shore Calhoun waited. Twenty minutes went by before a slight swishing of the waters struck upon the ears of the anxious watcher, and a minute later the keel of a small sampan grated on the strand.

While Denny was resuming his clothing he whispered to his chief, "About a score of sailors are camped on that island and just back of them lies another turtle-back showing no lights. I could just make her out in the gloom. I found the boat on the beach."

The two men lost no time in getting into the boat and beginning their journey around the islands. What they saw rewarded them well for their labor. Fourteen vicious looking warships nestled among the islands, each of them a masterpiece of the ship-constructor's art. That there were more Calhoun surmised, but he had seen enough, and Denny and he headed their little boat for the island upon which their machine awaited them.

Hurriedly disembarking, they ran to the flyer and climbed into the saddle. With a quick swing of his lever Calhoun turned on his power and, as they shot upward and southward, their hearts were full of joy. Even as they swung above the tree-tops, however, the shrill of a bugle sounded from below and the death-like quiet of the gulf was shattered by the answering blasts. Far to the south, above the great island that lay between the bay and the China Sea, a bar of white light swept across the sky. Underneath the *D*-12 a beetle crept out from among the islands! From channels after channels other beetles shot out and fell into the wake of the first, until there was a long line of them, each with an eye of light astern and astem, and green and red starboard and port lanterns agleam like rubies and emeralds. From Hanai, in a glittering flock, rose the advance guard of airships, making beautiful the black sky as they darted to and fro.

CALHOUN and Denny, floating above the moving fleet, gasped as they understood the meaning of it all. They had found the object of their quest, but too late. Mok-Hi was in motion! These were his dreaded sea-fighters, these jeweled beetles that swept in column down to the harbor mouth. Calhoun counted them—one, two—twenty-three in file now, and still the little channels were sending them forth.

Calhoun looked to the south a second, considering the chance of breaking through the arc of airships and carrying his warning to Manila. But he dismissed the thought with a curse. The pitiful force in Cavite Bay would be but a mouthful for this dread armada. Better away to the north, the north and west, to send abroad throughout Christendom the news that the Mongol was on the march, with his armor girt about him and his sword naked in his fist.

He turned his airship's head. Then a slight cry escaped him, for all around him the sky was filled with the darting gleams and, one by one, search-lights reached out into the heavens, searching the sky. He knew what it meant; they were seeking the *D*-12. And it could not be long before they found her. With a little laugh, the laugh of a fighting man, he turned to his lieutenant.

"Trapped, Denny," he said. "Shall we blaze up and show them where we are?"

Gilhooly's blue eyes were bright and cold, like a good blade. Already he was pouring shells into the loading chamber of the bow mitrailleuse, and he grinned as he nodded his hearty concurrence.

"Break out the old flag, then," Calhoun commanded, "and train a light on it!"

"Aye, and we'll put a good sign on it!" the lieutenant cried as he drew the bunting

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toward him. Ripping the sleeve of his shirt from the shoulder, he tore it into strips and soon upon the Stars and Stripes a rude white cross was pinned. An instant later the beautiful banner was snapping out from the short staff and as Calhoun turned the switch and the white glare fell upon it it streamed out, a glory and a defiance, high in the heavens, against the black Asian sky!

Immediately a score of searches met upon the American flyer. Denny had dropped the glass shutters into their metal housings and old *D*-12 was cleared for action! Her nickel sides shone bright in the white light and her deadly mitrailleuse gleamed across her bows. Alert in their saddles were the two soldiers of Christendom, waiting for the charge of that flying battalion whose rays had searched them out.

But the expected charge came not. Instead, a single powerful monoplane shot forward from the line of airships, dipping and raising its broad white search, as a courteous duelist would salute with his sword when about to engage. Calhoun advanced his own search until it blazed upon the saddle of the on-coming aeroplane, and a grim smile twisted his lips as the white light flashed upon the diamond bound upon the high brow of Kaow the Hunchback! A gay and courteous smile was on the magnificent face of the Chinese Emperor, and he raised his hand in graceful salute as he sped forward. Beside him sat a gaudily uniformed officer with a hand upon the button of a rapid-fire piece whose muzzle protruded above the bow.

"He's a gallant fellow after all, by ——!" Denny exclaimed. "He's going to keep his word and give us a fight single-handed."

Calhoun made no answer; he was watching the advancing monoplane. She was a beautiful thing to see. The long and slender body, the pale blue and golden sweep of her striped wings, fully thirty feet from tip to tip, and the glint of her polished brasswork, made her look like some huge and magnificent butterfly. Only the business-like muzzle of her magazine gun as the slim but deadly piece swung on its pivotal mount and the keen steel lance-like projection from her graceful prow betrayed her war-like character. The Emperor handled her with exquisite skill. She swayed and dipped and swerved as if answering the will of her master and she gave forth no sound, save the cushioned hum of her propeller blades.

"She can do eighty," was Calhoun's estimate as she approached.

The American did not await her coming. With his deflectors upward he shot forward; the wild whoop of joy that came from Denny was carried away by the rushing winds. Kaow shifted his level to meet the American's ascending flight and his magazine gun swept up and down, seeking the range and the target.

At last it began to spit viciously, but Calhoun had expected the attack and his sudden descent avoided the streams of projectiles. As they passed under the monoplane, Denny turned loose with the electric repeaters, firing straight up at the shining body that rushed above them. Kaow turned to the attack with a long and beautiful sweep to the starboard and Calhoun, who had swung around in a quick port curve, faced him again.

The arena of this mid-air tourney was flooded with the lights. The circling airships of the Chinese army had centered their fan-searches upon the two combatants and their crews were watching with intense eagerness the strange conflict. They were watching it in wonder, too, for none of them could understand the chivalrous prank of the monarch.

Kaow anticipated Calhoun's second dip when the Chinese quick-fire spat again and he shot down on the descending American with terrific speed. It needed not the quick warning cry of Denny to make Calhoun clap on his accelerator, and he was just in time.

The steel lance of the Chinaman broke against the rear transversal of the upper plane and the blow sent the *D*-12 staggering forward. With any but a master airman at the wheel, the blow would have been fatal, but Calhoun's cool, firm hands calmed the ship's fright, and he had her on an even keel before Kaow could circle back to finish his work.

THIS advantage the Chinaman now had; the American's stern was toward him and he dashed forward to shatter her propeller blades with a volley from his bow guns. To escape him, Calhoun slanted his deflectors up and soared into the black sky, circling as he climbed.

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Behind him rushed the eager Emperor, and the cheers from the Chinese airships rang out on the heavy air as they rose in a living wall to keep within bounds the spiral flight of their enemy.

Denny had swung around in his saddle and was pumping his repeaters from a reeling mount at the pursuers. His eyes were ashine—this was the thing he loved—but his hand was steady and his body seemed a part of the machine on which he flew. In the white glare he saw a streak of red appear on the cheek of Kaow's companion and he grunted with satisfaction at the sign that one of his bullets had hit a mark. Calhoun was going upward in short, irregular leaps in order to disturb his enemy's aim, and the little pellets from the magazine gun were singing now above his head and again under his feet. He wriggled like an eel, rudder and deflecting shutters in continuous motion. Once he heard a ripping sound and his plane staggered and went down to port with two great rents in the upper span, but Denny was out on the frame-work in a flash and, while Calhoun balanced with consummate art, the adhesive patches were slapped on the wounded wing and the *D*-12 righted and went on in her flight.

Nearly three thousand feet up they had spiralled when Denny heard the sharp, metallic "Now!" of his chief, and he gripped his saddle as the airship turned abruptly downward and plunged like a stone into the black depths, leaving the astonished pursuer still shooting from the zenith.

For fifteen hundred feet the sickening drop continued before the flattened deflectors cushioned with a shock that wrenched the car at every joint and almost flung the two airmen from their saddles. As the ship straightened out and began slowly to glide upward in a long slant, Denny filled his exhausted lungs with huge mouthfuls of air and Calhoun, gripping the wheel with fingers of iron, listened with straining ears for some sound which would indicate that the jar had told on the machinery. There was none; the motor ran silent and sweet, and, with a smile on his lips, the Chief of the Sky Police looked up at his foe, descending now to meet him. As they approached at the two-thousand-foot level, Denny's blue eyes squinted along the sights of the mitrailleuse.

"I've got him! I've got him!" he screamed joyously into the sweeping winds with his fingers closed on the firing button. From thirty ports along the glittering bar a shower of missiles shot full at the long body and spreading pinions of the Chinese flyer, and the lieutenant's gay laugh rang out as the Emperor's barge reeled and careened upon its side and then began to zigzag helplessly, insanely, but with incredible swiftness, down into the black gulf. The searchlights of the surrounding fleet followed it down, and Denny could see it for the whole length of its fearful plunge until it crumpled up on the ground.

But Calhoun was not watching his stricken adversary now. His eyes were searching the circle of encompassing airships. At last he saw what he wanted, a gap of gloom in the gleaming circle, and he threw his lever forward until it clicked against the check-pin on the quadrant. At the same instant every light he had was housed and a thing of darkness and mystery shot forward at an eighty-mile-an-hour clip!

Those of the Chinese airships which had not followed their stricken master to the ground divined the meaning of the American's maneuver, but were too late. Calhoun had reached the gap in their line before they could close it, but they had their searches upon him and they let go with all available batteries. Through a white and blinding glare, torn by a hurricane of singing missiles, old *D*-12 shot, and away to the north and west. Behind, the baffled Chinese closed in in chase, but Calhoun peered down at his speed indicator and grinned as he saw the needle climb to eighty-five and then to ninety. He turned to Denny who lay back in his saddle, trying with his left hand to bind a piece of lint around his bleeding forehead. The lieutenant's right hand hung limp and useless; a bullet had struck him just above the elbow.

Faster and faster into the darkness Calhoun fled, with one hand on the wheel and the other reaching for the wireless keyboard. Onward he sped, riding through the night as Paul Revere rode in the dawn of the Nation's history, while before him he sent, ticking out through the heavens, his cry of alarm, an alarm to the people, just awakening to welcome the day on which the gentle Christ was born, that in the East the war drums had sounded and the flag of the Dragon had been flung to the breeze of battle against the faith and the civilization founded upon the morning song of the Angel Choir.

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LOST TREASURES OF AMERICA

Gold and Jewels Still Waiting to be Found by Some Modern Adventurer.

by BUFFINGTON PHILLIPS

THE greatest treasure in the United States, a vast sum that awaits some one's finding, is one concerning which I have sought the exact truth for the several years that I have followed this fad of collecting treasure-trove data. The publication of the story or stories about it may bring to light the men who can say definitely what is what. However, any man who cares to set out after it in a business-like manner may turn himself into a multi-millionaire between Christmas and Fourth of July.

This much is certain: somewhere on the upper reaches of the Missouri River lie four large barges, lost in 1866, loaded to their utmost capacity with gold estimated in amount from $7,000,000 to $25,000,000.

Just at the close of the Civil War some rumors of the finding of gold in the Black Hills of Dakota and Montana drifted into the towns on the border of civilization in the Northwest. It seems odd to think that fifty years ago that region was a frontier, but there are hundreds of old Indians now living on the reservations who then were fighting braves and fifty years ago they had never seen a white man's face.

There are some dozens of varied accounts that have been retold by the newspapers at several times, some of them attributed to Col. Wm. F. Cody (Buffalo Bill), General Nelson A. Miles, the late General Thomas Wood of Ohio, Major Burke and other noted Indian fighters. I give here a consensus of what I have heard and read without being able to guarantee the details.

In the Spring of 1866 some old prospectors in the back drift from California found gold in one of the tributaries of the Missouri, said now to be the north fork of the Cheyenne. Why it is no more certain will appear. Others of their ilk "smelled" the discovery and a band of no more than forty drew into the region, making a wonderful strike, the richest that has ever been made on American soil according to all accounts. The strike was made in what is now called Deadmen's Gulch, named to suit the story, but called in the old records

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Federation, Desperation and Starvation Gulches.

The gold was alluvial, washed down from the northern ledges, now being worked by the rich Caledonia Quartz Mine Company near Deadwood. The gravel banks and flats were inexpressibly rich with it and all Summer the forty men toiled feverishly, extracting as much as they could before the Winter should descend upon them, shut off their fish, game and vegetable food-supply and drive them to civilization, where the knowledge of the vast wealth of the Black Hills and the remainder of the auriferous region would become public property.

When the ground froze and they could work no longer they cut timber and made four large barges of shallow draft and on them loaded the gold in provision boxes, and mule- and deer-skins made into rawhide sacks. Even then they were compelled to leave some of it behind because the barges would not carry it.

The hostile Indians who had not dared attack so large a party in the mining camp with its excellent defenses and those who were apparently on friendly terms with the miners now took a hand in the game. After the hardy forty had reached the Missouri and had negotiated a portion of its distance they tied up one night, not long before Christmas. They were attacked by a large band of Indians, who massacred every living soul, sank the barges and took all their belongings except the gold, of which they did not know the value. Some accounts hold the Blackfeet responsible, others the Ogalala.

How the news ever got to the world I can not say, save as the Indians told of it and friends of the dead men traced them into the country from which they never came out. Gradually the story took form and it set the prospectors wild. They ranged the region from the Bad Lands to the Big Horn River for twenty-seven years and then came the great discovery in the Black Hills.

The gold left behind at the point of embarkation was finally found. Old workings which showed the vast quantities taken out by the forty prospectors were discovered and for a few years a torrent of alluvial gold poured out of the Black Hills. Then the whole thing settled down to the staid and regular quartz proposition.

THE *Kansas City Star* some years ago printed a circumstantial story stating that a young Indian student at Haskell had told a professor that his father was one of the braves in the massacre, knew where the barges were sunk and was still living on the reservation. It may be that the river has changed its course and left the barges under a thin layer of gravel, easily accessible on dry land. The way to find the treasure is to trace down the stories, locate some of the old Indians and induce them to locate the spot and point it out from memory. It should not be difficult.

SOME TREASURES OF THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

IN 1759 there was lost in the Bay of Islands, at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, the good ship *Primrose*, with a store of gold and silver and jewels aboard her. The story is an interesting one and modern diving methods should enable some one to locate the wreck and raise the treasure.

The *Primrose* was a privateersman with papers issued by Mr. Dupliex of Pondicherry, the avaricious Governor of Mauritius. Using his small post, dignified with governor's authority, he sent out large numbers of ships to prey on English commerce. In a few years they had returned to him a treasure so vast that he feared to send it directly to France as he dreaded the anger of the King, for the reason, so it is believed, that his privateers did not confine their activities to ravaging the enemies of Louis.

Howbeit, he loaded one of his largest vessels, the *Primrose*, and sent her to a brother in French Canada, who was to hold it till the Governor could resign, and, returning to France a poor but honest man, come to Canada and make his "fortune" by degrees. If a man should sail to Canada in those days and come back, on the next ship, a millionaire, the people at home in France would have been in no wise suspicious. It was believed to be a place where any man might get rich at once if he was not altogether a fool.

When the *Primrose* arrived in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, she learned from the fishermen that Quebec had fallen a month

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before and was in the hands of the English. In fact English ships might capture her at any hour if she remained on the Gaspé coast. The ship was very short of water and under the guidance of a fisherman pilot put out for the Bay of Islands where the French on the west coast of Newfoundland would welcome her.

A heavy storm arose and drove her on the reefs inside the bay where she sank in comparatively shallow water. Coast charting expeditions have marked down two wrecks there and one of them is probably the *Primrose*. The exact amount of her treasure is unknown, but it must be vast.

FULL of wild romance is the story of the "Devil Duval's Horde" on the top of the Rocks of Percé on the Gaspé peninsula, only about twenty-four hours ride by train from New York city. Certain British laws must be repealed before it can be recovered, however. It is in one of the out-of-way places of the world and very little is known by the general public about it. The superstitious French fishermen, unchanged in a hundred and fifty years, still await the return of the fierce pilot to claim his own.

The Rock of Percé, named for the adjacent fishing village, is one of the true natural wonders of our continent. When some convulsion of nature rent the coast this rock was split from the nearby mountain and left standing, a grim monument to the caprice of the gods of sea and land. Several hundred feet high, with a comparatively flat top, its sides are beetling and one side is about two hundred feet higher than the other. Once it was pierced by three arches through any one of which a small ship might sail, but now one of these has collapsed, leaving only the two huge galleries.

Captain Duval was a French privateer who returned only a small portion of his loot from English and other ships to the French authorities, and after the declaration of peace he became an out-and-out pirate. He protected the French fishermen and was generous with them. They, in their turn, protected him as the English peasants protected Dick Turpin.

At last he was hard pressed by the English, and having in his service a Micmac Indian who knew a secret trail to the supposedly inaccessible Rock of Percé, he collected all his caches of treasure in the maritime provinces and brought them to Percé. The Indian carried a line to the top of the rock and hauled up a block and fall. Then two prisoners were hauled up, and next Duval himself. Boats containing the great treasure-chests stood by below.

The tradition is that they were a day and a moonlight night getting it all up. Then the Indian was sent down and Duval himself was lowered away. His rapier was dripping with blood and when he reached the boat he stood up, and with a harquebus shot at the tackle till it was cut clean, too high up the rocks for any one to reach. "Devil Duval" sailed away and never returned.

For years the winds battered and the sun and rains rotted the ropes on the wall of the rock till at last they disappeared. So many lives were lost in attempts to scale the rocks and recover the treasure that a law was passed forbidding any one to make the attempt without the necessary legalized concession from the governor of the province of Quebec. Only the wild sea-birds, making their nests in the top of the rock, know the story of the two prisoners and the chests of treasure on the bleak heights. But an airship could learn it.

CARLETON Island, in the St. Lawrence River, was an outfitting place for Tory raiding parties and an arsenal was established there. A pay chest was sent to the post with a large sum of money. The chest disappeared and its loss was reported to General Haldimand at Montreal. In 1879, Colonel Horr, of Cape St. Vincent, received a visit from a stranger, who requested the use of a boat and, being granted it, he rowed to Carleton Island and returned in a short time with a heavy iron chest covered with clinging wet clay. Colonel Horr, thinking nothing wrong, helped the man row to the steamboat landing and he was never heard from again. In a few days William Majo, one of the owners of the island, sent a boy into the pine thicket for straying horses and there the lad found the flat-stone-lined hole where the chest had rested.

Several heavy kegs of gold and silver have lain for a century in the mouth of Chippewa Creek where it empties into the St. Lawrence, dropped there by an American

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patriot, named Samuel Patterson, at about the time of the war of 1812.

Patterson was an English-born American and when he refused to enter the English army his property was confiscated and he fled from his farm in Kingston, Ont., to the American side and built himself a rude home at Chippewa Bay in New York. By way of revenge he organized a guerrilla band.

Creeping through the forest one night, on what he had promised his wife would be his last foraging expedition, he came unexpectedly upon three men sitting around a camp-fire. Creeping up near them he heard them telling of a bank robbery they had committed that night in Kingston. A little while later they left the camp-fire where they had prepared an evening meal and Patterson followed them to where they had a skiff hidden in the bushes just at the mouth of the creek.

He marked the spot and a few minutes later saw them lift the kegs over the side of the boat and drop them into the bay. He told only his wife of his discovery and enjoined her to secrecy. Three days later he took a row-boat and rude hoisting apparatus and started out from the shore to recover the treasure. He was evidently being watched from the shore, for he was shot in the boat and died before any one found him.

His wife told a little of his story to some of his former foraging band and the place was watched carefully day and night until word was received that the robbers had been caught and imprisoned. No search was made, the men probably fearing a similar fate. As far as careful research can tell, the kegs are still there awaiting a finder.

FORTUNES BURIED IN NEW ENGLAND

THERE are two extensive areas of buried treasure in the thickly populated parts of the United States. One, the lesser, is on the general lines of Sherman's march to the sea. North and south of it, plantation after plantation, town after town have their stories of treasures ranging from a few hundreds of dollars to hundreds of thousands which were buried for fear the Union army would get them. Many were never recovered because of the failure of the owners to locate the burial places. The surest way to lose a treasure is to bury it, it seems. The earth in some mysterious way spreads a mantle of oblivion which can not be pierced by the memory of man and takes back to her bosom the treasure that was wrested from her.

The other area is in the east, beginning at about Camden, N. J., and extending north to Albany and thence to Portland, Maine. In that field lived the rich Royalist and Tory families.

The sudden turning of the tide found the Tories in possession of a great quantity of gold coin, gold and silver plate and jewels, and fearing they would lose these, they buried them and then fled. Comparatively little of it was ever exhumed and the area is dotted thickly with localities where a search would be highly profitable. Of them I can mention a few only.

At Sound Beach, Conn., lives Mrs. Jane Louden, 101 years of age. Her husband, knowing that on the home farm a wealthy Tory family had buried gold, hunted until he found several pots containing several thousand dollars each. A neighbor also acquired sudden wealth which he did not explain. Every one knew there was a great joint family cache somewhere near.

It was known for many years that on Lord Edmeston's estate near West Edmeston, N. Y., his personal representative, Perdifer Carr, had buried a treasure. The property known as the Burdick Farm, having been bought by Henry F. Burdick in 1850, was the site. In 1904 a tenant named Cheeseborough plowed into a case of china and glass, breaking half of it before he realized what the obstruction was. By reason of design and quality the remainder, however, was worth a small fortune to dealers in antiques. It was the Edmeston ware. The law-suit that followed for possession made the case famous. Where is the remainder of the treasure?

Joel Coryell, sexton at Romulus, N. Y., digging a grave on what was a Tory estate in 1776, found a large quantity of money in an old pot. The grave belonged to Thomas Mann, but Coryell kept the gold.

WALTER BUTLER, the notorious Mohawk Valley Tory, returned to the valley at the end of the war with a force of Tories and Indians to dig up the treasures he had buried and those that had been buried by other wealthy Tories who had told him where to recover

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it in their behalf. When he had finished his work and was returning, the pursuing Colonials under Colonel Marinus Willet, overtook the treasure squad beyond Johnson's Hall on the bank of the West Canada in northern Herkimer County.

The treasure was too heavy for the fleeing party so it was dumped in the shallows and horses were ridden through the water to make it muddy. Butler was killed, the raiders driven away and the spoils await present-day seekers.

The baronial manor at Johnstown hides within its gloomy walls the secret of the hiding-place of a treasure that was cached at the direction of Sir William Johnson, the old English governor. The records do not give the directions necessary to the recovery, but somewhere in Johnstown, N. Y., is a chest of gold and jewels worth several thousand dollars.

While there is some doubt as to authenticity, there is said to be a $16,000,000 cache of Spanish doubloons, buried by Captain Kidd, on Esopus Island in the Hudson River, not far from New York City, while at the very gate of New York is a forgotten treasure of many hundreds of thousands. This famous treasure was lost when the British frigate *Hesasar*, a pay ship sent in for the British soldiers during the Revolutionary War, went down in the East River. It will be easy to look up the old Admiralty records and get the full information that may lead to the finding of the treasure.

The facts pertaining to Klopper Smith's horde are as follows: "Der Klopper" was a very brutal and much feared knight of the road on the west shores of the Hudson from Nyack to the Catskills and he robbed the wealthy Dutch in an unmerciful manner. He had no opportunities for spending his ill-gotten wealth and hoarded it somewhere. At last he was captured and before his execution at Newburg confided to a keeper who had been kind to him that he had sacks of gold and silver and jewels buried in a spot on Storm King Mountain, just north of Cornwall-on-the-Hudson, some thirty-five miles north of New York City. No search has ever been made.

In the hey-day of Mississippi river steamboat traffic, a great deal of sunken treasure accumulated in the Ohio, Cumberland, Tennessee, Missouri, Red and Arkansas rivers. A pay boat on its way to Grant's army at Vicksburg with more than two million dollars aboard was fired by some of her crew who meant to rob her. The paymaster's men defended the money till the boat sank. James B. Eads, who built the Eads bridge at St. Louis and the Eads jetties at the mouth of the Mississippi, invented an apparatus by use of which he could reach some of the treasure-wrecks in shallow water and recovered several million dollars. All of it could be reached with comparative ease now.

Just above Pine Bluff, Arkansas, a steamboat said to have been the *Carlyle J. Harrison*, with several hundred thousand dollars in gold to pay for cotton, was sunk in 1869. None of it has ever been recovered.

THE VISION OF THE NEGRESS

IN THE Summer of 1863, Quantrell, the great raider, reached the height of his activities in Kansas. It was then that he attacked and sacked Lawrence, carrying away with him a huge sum of money. This he buried to a certainty and never recovered. Somewhere between Lone Jack and Blue Springs it lies, and ever since that time searching has been going on. Many small caches have been found, but they were evidently small sums hidden to prevent their being taken by Quantrell. Quantrell camped near Tarsney in Van Beuren township and there to-day, on a hill, stands a boulder with a big "W" cut in the top, reputed to be one of the markers of his cache.

A short while ago, a man named St. Clair, of Welsh, La., was told by an old negro conjurer woman, that she had a vision to the effect that, in Tarsney, a Mrs. Harris had buried money to keep it from the soldiers. The old negress had never heard of Tarsney and did not know where it was, but something told her that St. Clair did. As it happened, he had spent his childhood there. He returned at once, measured as instructed and soon recovered the money Mrs. Harris had hidden. Efforts are being made to exercise the old woman's powers of second sight to find the Quantrell treasure and many smaller sums.

THE SUNKEN BARGE

THERE is a fascinating story about an old barge that is buried in the Missouri sand-flats near Fort Rice, North Dakota. With it is buried silver worth more than

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half a million dollars. At the time when the unsuccessful prospectors were toiling, empty handed, back from the gold-fields of California, a little band of men struck a rich find near what is now Virginia City, Montana.

They built a rude camp and, with the poor implements that they had, worked feverishly for many months until they had taken out all that their packs could carry across the miles of uncivilized country they must cross to the navigable rivers of the upper Missouri. Toiling across the mountains, always in danger of massacre, facing starvation and privations, breaking roads in the frozen flats and blazing trails through the forests, they finally reached the river near Painted Woods, and there built a rude barge and loaded it to the water's edge with the rich silver ore.

Traveling by night, in constant fear of Indian outbreaks, they wended slowly down the partly frozen river, knowing that soon they would reach the frontier town and safety. It was in '64 and the few scattered settlements had been deserted. No Indians had been seen for days and, taking courage, they traveled faster and with less caution. When they were near Fort Rice they were attacked by the Indians and all of the little band were killed with the exception of one man, Pierre Laselle.

Ignorant of the wealth aboard, the Redskins sunk the float, and Pierre Laselle escaped to Fort Rice leaving behind him no trace of the expedition; the secret of the hardships and toil and wealth were with the river and with him. He told no one anything about it for some time -not until he had enlisted in the army and maneuvered so as to get back to be near his treasure. Then he took an old Quaker, named Richard Pope, into his confidence and at the urgent request of the Quaker his son was also told the secret.

Three months later the little party, well armed and well provisioned, went quietly to the spot that Laselle remembered so well, only to find that the river course had changed and a bar of sand had formed over the barge. Not dismayed, however, they dug until they found the prow of the old scow and on the very eve of success they too were attacked by the Indians and Laselle was killed! Pope and his son, too badly frightened to work again within the year, went back with the secret to the town and while there young Pope died.

After many years the old Quaker took another man, named Emerson, and with the drawings that Laselle and he had made they went back to the place of trove and found that the sand-bar had grown and that the river ran many hundreds of feet away from the spot where the fortune lay buried in glistening sands. Where Pope said the old diggings would be found a young cottonwood tree was flourishing. They spent weeks digging for many feet around the place, but found nothing. Some mistake had evidently been made in following out the former instructions, but the barge was there, because Pope and Laselle found it on their first visit. Pope is dead, but Emerson is still alive and has the old drawings, letters and records. Maybe he can be induced to part with it, and maybe not, but somewhere in the flats near Fort Rice is a snug little fortune awaiting some finder.

GOLD AND JEWELS IN FLORIDA

BEHIND the city of St. Augustine, in some likely spot, another rich treasure is located. When it was a rich Spanish town, a favorite putting-in port for the heavily laden Spanish galleons that were coming through the Straits of Florida to avoid sailing the waters made dangerous by Peter the Terrible and Sir Henry Morgan, its wealth attracted the attention of the freebooters and word of their preparations to attack and loot the city was carried to the Captain-General.

For weeks the city was in a state of great perturbation and when some English ships, probably privateers, appeared off the coast, the public treasure, the church treasure and the valuables of the wealthy citizens were assembled, removed inland and hidden. For months the state of suspense continued until the Spanish Admiral Quintana appeared with his fleet. Then the St. Augustinians thought they could safely bring back their wealth. To their horror the three prominent men entrusted with the secreting of it, either could not find it or pretended they could not. One fled to Spain before the anger of his fellow-citizens and his flight cost the lives of the other two. They were assassinated as soon as the flight became known.

The archives of the Spanish admiralty have full record of the affair and the true key to the treasure-trove can best be found

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by searching the family papers of the man who fled. He never returned, but without doubt he left the valuable information to his heirs.

ALL the treasures written of in this series have been of gold, silver, plate, ore or jewels. There is one without much romance attached to it, but in search of which several Toledo and Cleveland capitalists have expended a great deal of money. Some time in the fifties, the old lake schooner *Favorite* went down during a storm on Lake Erie near the mouth of the Detroit River. She was bound for Maumee Bay and Toledo with a heavy cargo of whisky.

Sixty years after the disaster, (in 1902) the sole survivor of the ship's crew was found and has told where the *Favorite* was wrecked and of the valuable cargo she carried. His mind was deranged and he had spent all those years on a lonely island in Lake Erie. Two companies are fighting with each other over the division of the money if the schooner is found and there is a chance for some one to get quietly to work while the argument is going on in the corporations' magnificent offices and get the prime liquor on the market at a fabulous price.

LOST MINES

WHERE millions await the finder in wilder and more uncertain spots is far more interesting ground than the localities where thousands lie under the very noses of the townspeople, or where the plow passes every year over the buried trove. All through the West are rich mines which have been found and lost. The very day this is being written I learn that at last there is a chance of refinding the famous Wolf Creek silver mine about forty miles east of Libby, Montana. In a short range of mountains, some four miles above Wolf Creek Falls, James Pelling, a veteran prospector, twenty-eight years ago discovered a wonderfully rich silver ledge. He was offered fabulous sums for his strike, but he was a sour-tempered and perverse man and, after his best bargain was spoiled because of his surliness, he retired to his claim and spent three years on it, merely taking out enough to keep him alive.

At last some family matter called him away and while he was gone a small landslide, evidently caused by a freshet, carried away his cabin, his workings and all the markings of the ledge. He had, in the meantime, struck a bargain and returned with a surveyor. When he found what had happened he seemed to lose his mind. Later he recovered, gave directions to three men where to find the spot and they left Libby, but never returned.

Not long ago an Indian confided to William Ramsdell, owner of Sixty-nine ranch in the Tobacco Plains country, that the three men had been killed by Flathead Indians while they were at work on the mine. Knowing that their workings must remain visible, a party of prospectors went into the country in the Spring of 1911, seeking the location. It is a very wild stretch of desolate land reached only by an old trail, and I have not heard the result.

There are more than forty famous tales of lost mines, but whenever one hears them told around the prospecting party's fire or in the bars of the camps of the desert there is always an added hush, a more intense interest when some grizzled veteran of the pick begins the details of the great Esperanza de Guannare. Long located in the mountains west of Sonoita Sonora, Mexico, it is now believed to be in the lower end of the dry and desolate Mohawk Range in the southwest part of Arizona. The man who finds it can sell it for ten million five minutes later, if he chooses, but there are not many practical miners, who know its history, who would accept even that price.

ABOUT 1690 a Jesuit missionary among the Indians succeeded in winning their confidence and established a successful propaganda. He sent out through the chain of missions in the Asuncion River valley a quantity of solid gold religious articles made by the Indians. An adventurer named Bernardino Guannare, hearing of them, worked his way slowly into the country where the Spanish soldiers dared not push their conquest and began trading with the Indians for their gold. It is said that he poisoned the good missionary that he might the better cheat the Indians. He practically assumed charge of the mission work in conjunction with his trading, and worked their beliefs around to a new religion which allowed him a multiplicity of wives.

In time he had the Yaqui secrets and was

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led to the great ledge where on two sides of a cleft in the rocks an ore of extravagant richness appeared in three wide veins. He remained several years sending out a little and buying things the Indians might fancy. He made work in the mine part of this religion and, at last, when he took to the coast his first great instalment, the Spanish authorities forced him to pay his ten per cent. to the church and fifteen per cent. to the crown.

In nine years the records show that the two received through him $19,000,000! When the primitive methods he used are considered this is seen to be a staggering sum. Then he died quietly, leaving a half-breed son. He was soon killed by the Indians, who abandoned the mine. In time only the elders knew of it and to-day it is one of the secrets of the high chiefs. One by one the Mexican Government is capturing them where they have been driven southward by civilization and sending them to Quintana Roo to toil in the chicle and mahogany forests and on the Yucatan henequin plantations. Another generation and the secret will be lost unless some American prospector strays into that cleft, reads the signs of the rocks and knows that his life-long dream has come true—that he is rich beyond his wildest dreams of golden wealth.

THE THING HE NEEDED

by Johnston McCulley

AGAIN the bedlam of screams and curses and again the shower of stones rattled against the wall and crashed through the windows already half broken out.

Sterns gave a shriek of fear and fell flat to the floor. Lane laughed. Burton looked at Sterns in pity and I remained standing against the wall, my head whirling because of a blow I had received from a stone a short time before, my senses half-numbed, my eyes heavy from loss of sleep, but my mind alert because of the danger that hovered near.

Down in the frenzied mob of Turks a couple of shots rang out and Lane rushed to the window, exposed himself and emptied his revolver by way of answer.

"Got a couple of the brutes!" he announced.

Sterns was scrambling up from the floor. He sneaked across the room to a place beside the wall and beside Burton, who had been his friend and companion for years.

"Do you think—we'll—we'll ever get out—alive?" he gasped.

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"I don't know—I don't know," Burton mumbled in reply.

Another chorus of screams and shrieks, another volley of stones, several more shots!

"The gentlemen below," said Lane coolly, "are waiting for dusk. Then, when we can not see so well to hold them off with our revolvers, they will crawl over the wall, enter the house and proceed to massacre us. Or else, wishing a touch of the theatrical, they will set fire to the place and burn us out. Either way, we get it—if we remain."

Sterns gave a squeal of fear—a squeal like that of a rat.

"As for you," said Lane, turning to him, "try to be a man, or even half a man! If you die, you die, and for heaven's sake don't do it with a scream of fear on your lips. Remember that you'll die with us and we don't care to die with a coward. Pick off a couple or three of the beggars before they get you."

Burton threw one arm around Sterns' shoulders.

"There, there, Lane," he said, "Sterns isn't used to this sort of thing. He's never been in a scrap like this before. And those cries and curses are enough to terrorize any man. You just forget Sterns."

"I wish I could," replied Lane, and he turned toward the window again. His reappearance was the signal for another volley of stones.

"Kill the Americans—kill the Americans!" hundreds of Turks were screaming from below.

After the stones had passed, Lane arose and poured hot lead down upon them, then walked back to the center of the room again.

"It keeps 'em guessing," he said, "and will delay their close entrance in this affair. As I was saying a few minutes ago, we'll have to clear out of here. It'll be night in an hour."

"How?" I demanded.

"There are Turks' clothes here—the servants left so quickly that they didn't take their wardrobes. And it is easy to stain a face."

"And then?" asked Burton.

"Then we will take a chance—a big chance. We will slip out into the garden, hide in the darkness, mingle with the crowd as soon as we can and gradually work our way from the place. Then we'll cross the town and strike out into the country. Constantinople is no place for Americans at this stage of the game. But there's a village ten miles out where a friend of mine lives, a German. He'll hide us until this affair blows over."

"We'd never make it," I said.

"It's a chance," said Lane, "and it is our only chance. That mob will be at us before morning, in spite of all we can do, or else burn us out."

"I guess Lane's right; it is our only chance," said Burton.

Sterns was crouching in a corner.

"Leave here?" he cried. "Go out and face those devils? They'd tear us to pieces!"

"That's what they'll do if we remain here," said Lane. "You keep still, Sterns. You'll do just as we say and we'll engineer this deal. We'll save that yellow carcass of yours in spite of you. I've seen men with a yellow streak, but I never saw a man before who was all yellow."

"Sterns is all right; he simply isn't used to this sort of thing," defended Burton. "All he needs is something to awaken his dormant courage."

"The thing he needs to do that doesn't exist," sneered Lane. "But we waste time. I'll send a few more bullets at the crowd. Burton, get us some clothes."

Burton hurried away. In ten minutes he was back with four costumes.

"Furniture polish will stain hands and faces," said Lane, "and there's a bottle of it in the next room. I saw it this morning and thought maybe we'd need it."

He got the polish and returned. He took me first and smeared the evil-smelling stuff over my face with a soft cloth. Then he made me wash my hands in it. While I put on the Turkish costume he attended to Burton.

It would serve its purpose in the dark, I decided when I saw Burton fully dressed. I fixed Lane's face myself. Then Burton took the polish and began on Sterns.

Sterns was still the cringing coward.

"We'll be torn to pieces—torn to pieces!" he kept repeating.

It was growing dusk when Sterns was finally rigged out. We looked from the window—all but Sterns—to see the horde of natives crowding near the walls, continuing their shrieks and curses, reviling all Americans. Lane fired a couple more shots into the midst of them.

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"Why doesn't the Government give us protection?" Sterns whimpered. "Why don't they send troops?"

"Half that mob are soldiers," snapped Lane. "And what does the Government care? The Government may be behind this; you never can tell."

Gleams of light came through the shattered windows. The Turks had thrown bundles of burning cloth over the wall.

"It's time to start," Lane said.

II

HOW had the riot started? Nobody could tell. Out of commercial peace had come a boycott against American goods. The natives took it up. They began to form mobs. They slaughtered Americans. And the Government was powerless, or else unwilling to interfere, as Lane had intimated.

Lane and I were civil engineers and we had seen rough service. Lane was the sort of man who never knows fear, always is self-possessed in the presence of peril. He had shot his way to safety more than once and he had saved me a dozen times.

Burton and Sterns were partners, had been for years, and never were two men greater extremes. Burton was a man of wealth, a globe-trotter. Sterns was a student and a good one. He visited out-of-the-way places with Burton, who supplied the funds and got a half interest in any glory their discoveries might bring. For years they had been inseparable.

We had been scattered when the riot broke out. We had seen Americans slain before our eyes. Lane and I had fought our way to the edge of the town, where an American we knew had a residence. He was gone when we got there—whether he was dead or not we did not know. And his Turkish servants were gone, too. So we had closed the gates to the wall and barricaded ourselves in the house, for some of the mob had followed us.

That was forty-eight hours before. And just twenty-four hours before, at nightfall, Burton had appeared at the rear gate, half carrying Sterns. They, too, had been trying to reach the haven on the outskirts of the city. Lane and I had a tough time of it getting them inside safely and closing the heavy gates again. And so, since that time, we had been standing them off.

Burton had given able assistance, for he had courage. But Sterns—Sterns the scholar, seemed to have no manhood, no nerve, not an iota of personal bravery. It would have been bad enough had he remained in a corner and taken no part in the defense. But to that he added his whimpering, his hysterical fear.

And so, as we left the room and crept to the lower story of the house and toward the rear, Lane stepped up and grasped Sterns by the arm and spoke with him.

"This is going to be a hard job, Sterns, but it is our only chance," he said. "Try to buck up and be a man. If you can't do anything else, for heaven's sake keep your mouth shut and stop that sniveling! If one of those brutes hears you speak a word of English, you'll be torn limb from limb. It'll be the same if you show fear. Try to get some courage in that white heart of yours!"

Burton said nothing at this outburst; he realized that Sterns needed the talk.

We reached a rear door half-hidden by a growth of vines. The light from the bundles of burning cloth cast no reflection there. Lane slipped out first and we followed one by one and stood in the shadows to look about us. The deep shadows stretched all the way to the wall.

It took us ten minutes to get there, for we crawled, stopping now and then to rest and to look about. Not a sound did we make; we scarcely breathed.

But we reached the wall in time and stood up against it while Lane scrambled noiselessly to the top and peered over.

"It's a go!" he reported in a whisper. "We'll win out! We'll win out!"

It took us ten minutes more to climb over the wall and get outside. Sterns was the last. He was trembling when we helped him down.

"Keep your hands on your revolvers," Lane directed. "Don't use them except as a last resort. This is to be a game of bluff, not of violence."

"Suppose they speak to us," Sterns said. "I can't talk their language."

"I can," I answered, "and so can Lane. Let us do the talking."

We followed the wall, still keeping in the shadows. The fanatics were redoubling their shrieks and curses, because, evidently, no more shots were coming from the house. And they were growing bolder, too.

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We reached the edge of the crowd and mingled with them without being questioned. We moved here and there, gradually working our way to the nearest street.

"Kill the Americans! Kill the Americans!" they were screaming in our ears.

And Lane and I, brandishing our arms, yelled it also, and so we passed unnoticed.

"You are not yelling," a native accused Sterns.

The scholar drew back. Lane stepped between them.

"He's a holy man—under a vow," Lane explained in a breath. "What he does not cry out, he thinks."

The native bowed before Sterns and we passed on.

"Yellow coward!" Lane whispered to me. "The thing he needs to awaken his courage doesn't exist."

Finally we were beyond the crowd. Looking back we could see that the house we had quitted was in flames, and the hundreds of shrieking devils danced around it and cheered and hurled stones and fired shots at the burning structure.

Stumbling down the street with Lane in the lead, sprawling over dogs and intoxicated men, we made our way onward. Lane led us straight toward the north.

An hour we walked, going slowly so as not to create suspicion. Here and there were other mobs and from the talk of the natives we knew that the uprising against Americans was general, that it had spread even to the villages, that the United States was rushing warships to Constantinople and that European nations were doing the same. We heard tales of wholesale murder and pillage, of burning mercantile establishments and residences, of men and women and children butchered in the spasm of fanaticism.

The night passed and the dawn came and still we had not been able to get clear of the city, for at times mobs caught us and carried us with them and we were forced to go along or betray ourselves. We had many narrow escapes, too, but Lane and I, with our knowledge of the language, kept trouble away.

And so we came to the square—the square with the little fountain on one side of it.

III

IT SEEMED there were thousands of them in the square. They seethed back and forth, a human whirlpool, giving their deafening shrieks, cursing the men of the New World.

At the corner of a building we held council.

"We separate here," Lane said. "Burton, you take Sterns and go to the right. Make your way around the square as soon as you can without running any danger and meet us by the fountain. I think it is the better plan. We'll go to the left. Once across the square we'll be through the worst of it. We ought to be out of town and on the way to the village in an hour."

And so we started, Lane and I to the left; Burton and Sterns to the right.

I'll never forget that fight against the rushing mob. Here and there we were carried, not able to go where we liked, tossed about like corks on a turbulent pool. We hugged the fronts of the buildings and, with the unearthly din in our ears, worked our way toward the little fountain. And when we reached it, Burton and Sterns were not there.

"We made a pretty quick trip, considering," Lane said. "They'll be along in a minute or two. Look alive now. We don't want things spoiled when we've gone this far."

Ten minutes we waited—fifteen—now and then walking a short distance from the fountain and back again, so that nobody would notice us standing there and think it peculiar. And Sterns and Burton did not come.

"They couldn't have missed the way," I said. "Perhaps they've been caught in the crowd and can not get through. We'll have to wait for them here."

On one side of the square there was a diversion. We saw natives rushing forward, heard a new note in their cries, heard them laugh fiendishly.

"I know that tone!" whispered Lane. "They've got some poor devil and they're tearing him to pieces. See the knives flash!"

I looked across the sea of heads from the top step of the fountain. The light poured down from the buildings and I could see the knives upraised, but I could not see what they struck when they descended.

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Then the crowd hemmed in the scene and I could see nothing more but a mass of struggling men.

"If—if——" I began.

"Sterns, probably," Lane snapped in reply. "I suppose some one spoke to him and he shrieked in English. Sterns—probably Burton, too!"

"It might have been some one else; we'd better wait," I replied.

"Of course we'll wait," Lane said.

The crowd surged toward us, around us again, making the fountain the center. The lights in the buildings were extinguished, for the dawn had given place to bright day and the sun looked down upon the scene of death and human confusion.

And then, after some new fancy, the crowd surged back across the square and out of it staggered a man who came toward us as though the burden of the world were upon his shoulders. His clothes were torn, his face smeared with blood and dirt. He staggered and would have fallen and Lane put out an arm and steadied him. The man gave a little cry and cringed and we saw that it was Sterns!

"You!" Lane gasped. "Where's Burton?"

Sterns started to fall again. I gave him water from the fountain.

"Burton—he's—he's dead!" Sterns gasped.

"When? How?" Lane demanded.

"We got half way through," Sterns explained. "We were having trouble—because the crowd kept hurling us back. Some one jostled against Burton—cursed at him and struck him in the face. Burton—he—he lost his head—I guess—and he cursed back—in English. They—they were upon him in an instant. They tore him away from me—their knives came out! It—it was terrible! I—I wasn't more than ten feet away when—it—happened."

"Killed him?" demanded Lane.

"Cut—him—to—pieces!" gasped Sterns.

Lane grasped him by the throat and hurled him against the side of the fountain.

"And you," he hissed, "you let them do it! You—who had a revolver in your pocket—you let them do it! You never made a move to save him——"

"Lane—Lane!" I whispered hoarsely. "They'll hear you; they'll be at us!"

But he gave me no attention.

"You let these devils murder your best friend within ten feet of you!" he cried. "He's fed you and clothed you for years—given you money for your devilish research work. He's been father and mother and brother to you! And you let them murder him right in front of you—when you had a revolver!"

"They'd have killed me!" Sterns gasped.

"Better you than him—*he* was a man! And you—you're worse than a rat, for a rat will fight when it's cornered! Afraid of your precious hide! And all day yesterday he kept me from reviling you. He said you weren't used to such things. He defended you. And you never made a move—never made a move to help him, to save him! Couldn't you have given your worthless life in an effort? You cur!"

Lane's fist drew back; it crashed into Stern's face between the eyes. Sterns fell sprawling at the base of the fountain. Turks ran up.

"What is it?" they screamed at us.

"Nothing," Lane replied in their own language. "This man called me the son of a dog, and I struck him."

Then they turned away, eager for more exciting scenes.

IV

I BROUGHT Sterns back to consciousness by dashing water into his face while Lane looked on and utterly refused to help. Sterns began to whimper again.

"Stop that!" Lane commanded. "We'll tolerate you, until we get out of this. We'll help you save your yellow skin. But when we're out, we're done with you! I didn't know man could be a thing like you. You let him die before your eyes, never made a move to help him, because you were afraid for your precious skin! You yellow cur! And Burton said, only yesterday, that all you needed was something to awaken your courage. Wasn't it enough when you saw your best friend and protector being murdered? Awaken your courage? You need more than the world can give to awaken something you never had, never will have!"

Lane turned his back upon him then and I tried to wash the blood from Sterns's face without destroying his make-up. For now that it was day the danger would be greater. We must get out of the city, away from the mob and on the country road as

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soon as we could. Out there, where there were but few, we could fight if cornered and have a chance at victory.

"Straight up this street to the road!" Lane whispered to me. "When we're outside things will be better. Keep an eye on that craven wretch; don't let him get us in trouble."

We started to get down from the fountain, but into the square from the street there surged a new crowd and at their head was a man who carried a bundle. It was useless to attempt to make progress against that mob. So we waited, on the steps of the fountain.

We could not hear what they were saying, but the mob in the square broke into cheers. And in the center of the open space they formed a hollow square, with two or three men in the center of it.

Then we saw. The bundle was an American flag!

A torrent of jeers and hisses greeted it when it was shown. Lane and I stood on the top step, watching them prepare to defile it. Lane's face was white.

"The curs! The dogs!" he growled. "I'd like to see a fleet of dark gray ships come over here and knock this plague-spot of a town into splinters! If we only had a chance—if there were only a score, a hundred of them even, they'd have trouble before they'd do that!"

"What are they doing now?" I asked, for I could not see from where I was standing to the left of him.

He drew to one side and I saw. The flag was tossed into the air, then swung to the ground. And they stamped upon it, spat upon it, rolled it in the dirt, while the hundreds of fanatics laughed and cheered and shrieked in their delight.

"Death to Americans!" they screamed.

Some one plucked at my feet. It was Sterns.

"What is it?" he asked.

I half lifted him by one shoulder so that he could see. The crowd parted a little and he looked down and out into the center of the square.

The flag had been tossed into the air again, and again it was in the dirt, a target for boots and sputum.

"God! If we only had a chance!" Lane whispered hoarsely. "The curs! the curs!"

"It's—it's the flag!" Sterns gasped. "They're dragging it—in the dirt—they're insulting the flag——"

Men rushed through the crowd with rags and paper and wood and threw it in a heap. A match was applied. The crowd cheered again, laughed fiendishly.

Then some one caught the flag from the ground, twisted it into a dirty bundle and cast it on the top of the burning pile.

"The flag!" I heard Sterns gasp.

Suddenly he gave a mighty push that almost hurled me from the fountain. He sprang into the crowd, knocking men right and left, tearing away the cursed Turkish costume, making his way to the center of the square where the flames were crackling.

Lane and I stared after him with eyes bulging, not able to speak to each other. From our place on the fountain we could see it all.

On and on went Sterns, fighting like a maniac to get to the center. And he succeeded finally. Half naked he dashed into the hollow square, dashed to the fire, plunged his hands into the flames and arose with the smoldering flag in one hand and a revolver in the other.

"You cowards—curs!" he shrieked.

Then he began emptying the weapon at them.

For an instant there was a cessation of shrieks; then they came with redoubled fury. Hundreds of men surged toward him, hundreds of knives gleamed in the bright sunlight. They fought with one another to reach him.

And in the center of the pile Sterns the scholar, Sterns the coward-that-had-been, went down with the flag crumpled in his arms but not touching the earth—went down to death, his little body hacked to bits.

LANE staggered against me and we made our way down the steps. Silently we started up the street from whence the crowd had come, making our way toward the road that ran to the village in the country.

Behind us was the bedlam of shrieks and cries and curses, the fiendish screams of men who had killed.

Lane looked at me through streaming eyes. He spoke softly, in awe, as a man speaks of a sacred thing.

"The flag—he saw them defile the flag. That was—the thing—he needed!"

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THE ADVENTURE OF THE OLD CHESS PLAYER

A Tale of the Adventure Syndicate, Limited.

by George Barton

BARNES and his two friends sat in the living-room of the former's Washington Square apartment.* A timid knock on the door interrupted their conversation and, in response to the Chief's "come in," a girl dressed in black entered.

She was petite and her very white face was rendered snow-like by her black clothes. Clancy, with his ardent Celtic nature, thought she was the most appealing creature he had ever gazed upon. Forward mentally compared her to a dainty Dresden doll. She looked at the three men and then instinctively turned to the oldest.

"This is Mr. Bromley Barnes?"

"Yes."

"I am Emma Brown."

"Glad to meet you, Miss Brown."

The little lady halted irresolutely. But suddenly she cast all restraint aside and cried impulsively,

"I want you to save Jack!"

"Jack?" queried Barnes.

"Yes, Jack Winslow, the man I'm engaged to marry."

"Ah," he said, "the Winslow tragedy. You are interested in that?"

"Very much so," she replied bitterly.

"How?"

"Didn't you know that Jack has been accused of the murder?" she asked in surprise.

"To be perfectly candid, I didn't," said the Chief. "I never read these murders unless I am specially interested."

"Well," she retorted, with an assertiveness that sat strangely on her young shoulders, "I want you to be specially interested in this case."

"Why did you come to me?" asked Barnes.

"Because my father knew you. He worked in the Custom House when you were the Chief Investigator there. He said you could solve anything. I want you to solve this mystery."

"Suppose you give me the facts."

The girl took a few moments to compose herself before beginning the recital of the crime that had aroused the city.

"I met Mr. Winslow some time ago," she said finally, "and last Sunday week Jack took me to his father and presented me as his future wife."

"What did the old gentleman say to that?" asked Barnes.

"He was very angry. He said that Jack was too young to think of marriage. He said he should establish himself in business before taking a wife."

"Was there a quarrel?"

"You can hardly call it that. But old Mr. Winslow was an eccentric person. He

*Bromley Barnes, formerly chief of a detective bureau, his faithful factotum Cornelius Clancy, and his lawyer friend Forward have for their amusement formed "The Adventure Syndicate, Limited," to give Barnes a chance to prove that even present-day New York abounds in mystery, romance and adventure.—THE EDITOR.

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was very positive and the manner in which he talked disturbed Jack and made me very unhappy."

"When was he killed?"

"The night before last. You know he conducted a circulating library in the house in which he had lived all his life. Since the death of his wife a few years ago he has lived practically alone."

"Except his son?"

"Yes, of course. Jack slept in the house, but that was all."

"And the old man had no intimates?"

"He had one friend, a man named Adam Goodrich, who lived directly opposite, on the same street. Mr. Winslow was a chess enthusiast. Mr. Goodrich is the same. That was the tie that bound them. At night, after the old gentleman had closed the library, Mr. Goodrich would join him and they would play chess until eleven o'clock. Promptly at that hour they would quit. Frequently the game was left unfinished and they would resume it after supper on the following night."

"What happened on the last night Mr. Winslow was seen alive?"

"They met and played as usual. Jack came in just as they quit their game and he went to the front door with Mr. Goodrich and bade him good-night."

"Did Jack go to bed then?"

She hesitated a moment before replying.

"Not—not right away."

"What happened? Please tell me everything if you expect my help."

"You will help me, then?" she asked eagerly.

"I haven't said so yet. What happened?"

"They got into a discussion about—about me."

"What was the result?"

"Mr. Winslow said he would disown his son, and Jack said he intended to leave home the next morning."

"What time did he go to bed?"

"About midnight. He went to his room in the third story and left his father sitting down-stairs studying the unfinished chess game."

"Well, go on!"

"That was all—that night. At seven o'clock in the morning, Mrs. O'Brien, who cooked the meals and looked after the house, came and let herself in with her latch-key. Oh, I can't——"

"Go on!"

"She stumbled over something on the floor. It was Horatio Winslow with a bullet through his forehead, and she ran screaming from the house and called the police. They made a search. No one was down-stairs. They went up to the third story and found Jack sound asleep in bed. They awoke him and took him down and confronted him with the body. He was horror-stricken and nearly fainted, and they claimed that was a proof of his guilt, and now Jack is in prison, charged with the death of his father!"

Barnes looked very grave.

"Did they find the pistol?"

"No, they could not find a weapon anywhere. I said that it was a suicide, but they claim it would have been impossible for the old man to kill himself and then hide the weapon."

"A reasonable assertion," commented the Chief.

"Oh," she cried hysterically, "you're not going to turn against Jack, too, are you?"

"I'm not turning against anybody," said Barnes quietly.

"But he's perfectly innocent!" she insisted.

"How do you know?"

"He told me so!"

The detective laughed in spite of himself, and she began to cry softly.

"Come, come!" he said gently. "Can't you give me some proof of his innocence?"

She cried eagerly, "Why he *couldn't* be cruel enough to kill his own father!"

"Have you any of the newspaper stories?"

Opening a little black bag, she produced an envelope containing clippings of everything that had been printed of the crime.

Barnes read them all carefully and then looked intently at his visitor.

"Miss Brown," he said finally, "the facts seem to be all against the young man, but I admire your courage and somehow I have faith in your intuition. I'll take the case."

She jumped from the chair with a cry of triumph:

"I felt sure you would not desert me! I'll go and tell Jack at once. I'll let him know that he owes his liberty to you."

"If he gets his liberty," corrected the old man dryly. "We've got a hard fight ahead of us, but I'll do the best I can."

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BARNES acted with characteristic energy and promptness. His first call was at police headquarters. Captain Campbell, who was in charge, received him quite cordially, but frowned when he learned his purpose.

"That girl's been whimpering to you," he said, with nasty savageness.

"That has nothing to do with the case," retorted Barnes. "I came here for information."

"Well," was the insolent response, "we'll probably give you information that you don't want."

Barnes smiled cheerfully.

"It may be hard to get what I want here—since I'm after the truth!"

The Captain's eyes bulged and his face swelled until it looked as if he were about to have an attack of apoplexy. The other checked the incipient outburst of profanity by raising his right hand in that impressive manner of his.

"I'm not going to trifle, Campbell; if you don't answer me civilly, I'll go to your superior!"

"What do you want to know?" he cried doggedly.

"I'd like to know what became of the pistol."

"We couldn't find the pistol."

"Don't you think that strange?"

"Not at all; the kid's hid it somewhere. It will come to light in due time."

Barnes ignored the sneering tone.

"It has been said that no one was in the house except Jack Winslow. Wouldn't it have been possible for some thief to have got in by the front door?"

The Captain shook his head.

"No; everything was found locked tight. No signs of a jimmy. The front door had one of those patent appliances which made it shut automatically. The thief theory don't go either, because nothing was stolen. There's no use trying to apply any of your fantastic theories to this case, Mr. Bromley Barnes! The thing's as plain as the nose on my face. The kid got into a fight with the old man and killed him. That's all there is to it!"

After that unsatisfactory interview, Barnes hurried to the Winslow house. He found Mrs. O'Brien and Adam Goodrich, Winslow's faithful old friend, in charge. The good-hearted Irish woman had been weeping and the old chess-player looked forlorn.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Barnes," he said, with a break in his voice, "but nothing you can do can bring my dear old chum back to me again." He pointed to a table nearby. "Look there; there's the unfinished game of chess just as we left it that night. It will never be finished now. No one could play chess like 'Rash Winslow. He was a man worth playing with."

BARNES made a sweeping survey of the room.

"Was everything left undisturbed?"

"As far as we know," replied Goodrich. "Unless the police mussed things up."

The detective tried the door. It was a big, old-fashioned affair, controlled by a patent device that made it close of its own accord. He next made a careful examination of the big hallway leading to the door. There was a narrow mantelpiece against the wall. The plush drapery attached to this had been partly torn off. A small, nickel-plated alarm clock was on the floor, one side dented. The Chief examined these things carefully.

He was on his hands and knees, carefully examining the threadbare carpet.

"Did Winslow smoke?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Goodrich, "it was one of his consolations. Every night, before retiring, he smoked a pipeful."

"I thought so," murmured Barnes, as he gathered up a handful of the fine stuff from the floor.

"Now," he said, "if you will, I wish you would hold the door open while I examine the outside steps."

He wandered around for some moments, but presently found what he had been looking for. He arose with a grunt of satisfaction. They reëntered the house.

"I suppose," said Barnes, "they have probed for the bullet?"

"Yes," said Goodrich, "the coroner's physician did that. He took it away with him."

"I'll have to see it, but I don't suppose that's possible until morning. Did he have any reason for taking his life?"

"None whatever. He was a bit eccentric, but I think he was perfectly happy. He loved books and it cost him very little to live. He was in the midst of his beloved volumes all day, and had his game of chess with me at night. What more could a man

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wish? I don't suppose I'll ever play chess again. My nerves are all shaken. Two shocks in succession are too much for a man of my age."

"Two shocks?"

"Yes; early on the morning of this affair a thief tried to break in my house. I think he got away with some old clothes, but that was all. I discovered him."

"And you frightened him off?"

"You bet I frightened him off!" chuckled Goodrich. "I gave him a scare that he's not likely to forget. He won't try that game on me again!"

"Did you report the robbery to the police?"

"Yes, but I haven't heard anything from them."

"What did the fellow look like?"

"He was tall. I didn't get a good look at his face—he was climbing into one of the second story windows when I discovered him. You know there is a little porch or balcony around the upper part of my house."

"How did he get away?"

"He hung on to the ledge of the porch and dropped to the street and ran. I gave him a parting salute just to scare him. After that I went to bed and slept in peace until morning."

"What do you think of the charge against Jack Winslow?"

"I don't believe it," was the emphatic reply. "He was a decent boy and he loved his father as his father loved him. They were not demonstrative, but I know the affection was there. I don't know anything about their differences. That was a family matter that didn't concern me. But blood is thicker than water and the boy wouldn't harm a hair of his father's head."

"But the police believe him guilty."

"You mean they say he is guilty. That relieves them of any further responsibility."

"Probably you're right, Goodrich. At any rate, it's up to me to locate the thief. You say you scared him off, but how do you know that he didn't come back and try to get into the Winslow house?"

"That might be," said the other. "I'm sure I don't know."

EARLY next morning Barnes was in consultation with Captain Campbell.

"Well," said the policeman tauntingly, "I suppose you found things as I told you?"

"Precisely, Captain," was the suave reply, "but there's one little point I want you to clear up if you will."

"All right," was the mollified reply. "What is it?"

"I'd like to see your book of robberies or attempted robberies reported for Monday morning."

Campbell grinned.

"It's a long list."

"I suppose so, but I've plenty of spare time."

The book was produced and Barnes began his weary search. Finally he located an item which told of the attempt to break in the house of Adam Goodrich on Walnut Street.

"Did you notice this?" he asked the Captain.

"Yes; what about it?"

"Well, it's just opposite the house where Horatio Winslow was killed."

"I don't see anything in that."

"Probably not. Have you made any arrests?"

"No."

"Who have you in the cells now?"

"Oh, a couple of drunks, and a darkey caught with a suit of clothes. We arrested him on suspicion. Like to see him?" he asked with a challenging air.

"Why, yes," was the prompt reply, "I think I would."

A few minutes later Barnes was in conversation with James Madison, colored.

"James," said the detective, without any preliminaries, "why did you steal that suit of clothes from poor old Adam Goodrich?"

"Adam Goodrich?" was the puzzled reply.

"Yes, you know, the house on Walnut Street, where you broke in on Monday morning."

A gleam of recognition brightened the shining face.

"Oh, yes, Ah know now. Well, boss, Ah needed the money. But," with a grin that extended from ear to ear, "he ain't no poh man. He's able to take care of hisself!"

"Why did you kill Winslow?" asked the Chief suddenly.

The ruse failed to work. Madison only smiled.

"Ah didn't kill nobody. Ah come near bein' killed muhself."

After that retort he was as dumb as a clam. He positively refused to answer any

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more questions. He said he knew enough about law to know that if he talked too much he might incriminate himself.

But when Barnes left the station-house there was an air of confidence about him that puzzled Captain Campbell mightily. The Chief called in the coroner's physician next and obtained the bullet that had killed Winslow. From there he went to the Winslow house, where he made another and more careful examination of the hallway and the spot where the old chess-player had been found dead.

Finally, that night, he obtained permission from Adam Goodrich to sleep in his room in the latter's house. Similarly, he arranged that Forward should spend the night at the Winslow home. And last of all, he placed Clancy in the rôle of a burglar attempting to rob the Goodrich home.

The following morning Barnes, sitting in state in his Washington Square apartment, sent for Police Captain Campbell and Deputy Coroner Nordean. Campbell and Nordean were autocrats in their way and they had little love for Barnes, but they felt that his message meant business. They arrived at the apartment together.

"I want you both to release Jack Winslow," said the old man quietly.

Campbell laughed, but in an uneasy way. "I must say," he said, "that you dispose of that momentous affair in a light and airy fashion."

"I do it in a direct way," replied Barnes, unruffled. "I will produce the real culprit."

"What?" gasped Campbell. "When?"

Barnes looked at his watch.

"In a few moments."

"He's coming here?"

"Yes."

"Under arrest?"

"No; voluntarily."

The officers merely grunted their skepticism.

A slight tap on the door was heard. Every one sat upright. The knob turned and in walked Adam Goodrich, with a smile on his benevolent countenance. He seemed a bit surprised at seeing so many men in the room but he nodded pleasantly to them.

"Did you bring it with you?" asked Barnes.

"Yes," was the reply, and the aged chess-player handed a pistol to the detective. It was done with the innocence of a babe. The detective produced a bullet. It fitted in the muzzle of the weapon.

Every one gasped with horror.

BEFORE their emotion had died away, Barnes led Goodrich to an arm-chair and seated him in it comfortably.

"My old friend," he said gently, "can you stand a shock?"

"Why—er—yes," he stammered in wonder.

The Chief paused a moment as if unable to proceed.

"What is it?" insisted the other impatiently.

"You must not feel too badly about it," replied Barnes, "but unfortunately you are the man who killed Horatio Winslow."

"Impossible!" gasped Goodrich.

"That's what I said first, but I've demonstrated the truth to a mathematical certainty. Clancy, Forward and I reënacted the whole tragedy last night."

While Goodrich lay panting in the chair, the Chief told his story:

"The moment I heard that Mr. Goodrich had shot at a burglar I felt that the incident was connected with the tragic death of Winslow. Every step in the investigation strengthened that belief until the final proof has come just now. After Mr. Goodrich left that night, Winslow had the wordy altercation with his son Jack.

"It was disagreeable but not at all sensational. The boy has told me all that occurred. Presently Jack went to bed and slept soundly until morning. Winslow remained up, studying the unfinished chess game. Finally he lit his pipe for his good-night smoke. It was quite late, but he went to the front door, probably to take a look at the weather."

"I see," said the Deputy Coroner, nodding his head comprehendingly.

"The clocks were striking two," continued Barnes, "and at that identical moment James Madison, the colored thief, who had robbed the house of Adam Goodrich, was fleeing down the street. Goodrich, confused, came to the window and fired his pistol. The ball struck Winslow in the temple. He staggered back, releasing his hold on the heavy door, which was slammed shut and dead-latched by means of the patent spring. Inside the hall, the wounded man grabbed the plush cover of the mantel-

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piece for support. Part of it was pulled to the floor, together with the alarm-clock. Winslow died almost immediately."

"How do you know Winslow was at the front door?" asked Captain Campbell.

"Because the spilled tobacco from his pipe was not only in the hallway but on the front step."

"But the time? How do you fix that?"

"By three witnesses," was the reply.

"Who are they?"

"First, the colored thief, Madison. He says he heard the clock in a nearby steeple striking the hour. Second, Adam Goodrich. He admits that it was at that precise hour that he fired the shot."

"And the third witness?"

"The third witness," retorted Barnes, "is the inanimate nickel-plated alarm-clock that I found by the body. The hands of that clock pointed to two o'clock. Naturally it stopped the moment it was pulled from the mantelpiece."

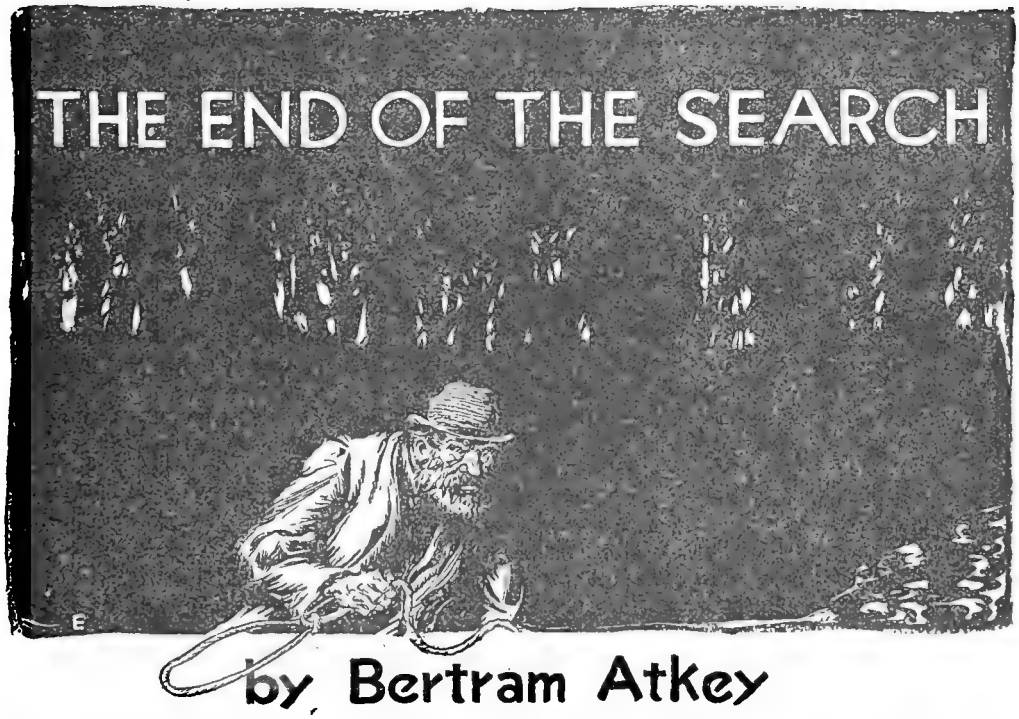
Adam Goodrich had his head in his hands and was sobbing with the intensity of a broken-hearted man. The Chief touched him on the shoulder and said softly,

"Never mind, Mr. Goodrich. You'll go free, of course, and you have the melancholy satisfaction of having cleared Winslow's son from a false accusation."

Finally the old chess-player controlled his emotion. He looked up with a tear-stained face. But the ruling passion was strong.

"Poor Winslow!" he said. "That game will never be finished!" Then he added hastily, with a look of defiance:

"If it had been, I'd have won!"



by Bertram Atkey

HE WAS sitting on the extreme edge of the landing-stage, staring absently across the lake which my trout were ringing busily in their evening rise; by his side was an old lobster-can filled with water, and he was chanting an interminable composition in which the word "Shoesmith" occurred at almost every line. At intervals he would break off the chant in order to sip delicately at the can. After each sip he would throw back into the lake what water remained and gravely refill from the water just below his dangling feet.

I halted on the edge of the trees which ran down almost to the edge of the lake, and

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watched him, listening. At first I had imagined him to be after the trout, but fish-poachers do not sing at their work, nor sip water, nor dangle their feet over landing-stages, ignoring time, opportunity and the approach of people.

He was black-haired and his beard and mustache and whiskers stood out from his throat and neck and face like a mane. All of his skin that I could see was burnt and weather-worn to the color of an old saddle. Near the lobster-can lay a bowler hat that had long bleached from black to brownish green. His clothes—for so palpable a tramp—were unusually neat, but they were shabby to the limit of usefulness. He was short and thick-set and middle-aged.

And certainly he was the last man that I had ever expected to discover sitting upon my landing-stage on a Midsummer evening, quavering a tuneless song that dealt wholly with the tribe of Shoesmith. It was impossible not to connect him with my neighbor, the wealthy Sir John Shoesmith. But how the two could be associated and in what enterprise of the past, present or future, it was difficult even to hazard a guess.

I listened.

"Shoesmith ninth was the same-sized man,
But his eyes was blue like the sea,
And his ways was mild and he preached in a chapel."

Then the man on the stage checked for a moment; then, suddenly raising his voice, announced decisively,

"So he wasn't the man for me!"

He sipped at his can, emptied it and refilled as before. Then he began again, chanting softly and surely, like a man singing a song which he had sung a thousand times:

"Shoesmith ten drove a motor-cab,
And his age was twenty-two,
And I says 'All right, Shoesmith,' I says,"

Again he checked the swing of it and raised his voice:

"'I mean no harm to *you*!'"

He was dealing with Shoesmith the eighteenth before I understood that probably the man was searching for a certain Shoesmith and was running over in his mind the Shoesmiths he had encountered during his search. Perhaps he was one of those men who possess a crude gift for rhyme and had found the doggerel he was now chanting the best way of keeping the charactistics of the various Shoesmiths fresh in his memory.

I went down. He was refilling his can and did not notice me until I was within a yard of him. But he did not exhibit any concern when he discovered me, though he must have known that he was in private grounds.

He looked up at me and I saw that his eyes were brown and friendly and even affectionate. I have seen a dog with such eyes. Now that I was quite near him I was able to mark the ravages that sun and storm and cold had worked upon his face. So tanned and worn and beaten was it that his soft eyes looked half absurd in their seamed and corrugated setting. The man must have suffered at some period or other of his life. His face, such of it as was uncovered by his extravagant beard, was that of a man who had endured much suffering, much pain.

HE GAVE me a slow smile, as he reached for his hat.

"I'm just goin', mister," he said, and his voice was slightly hoarse, but pleasant. "I ain't got no right in here, but I ain't hurt nothing. It was the look of the water. I seen it shinin' through the trees from the road and I thought I'd jest like to sit down by it for a spell. It's a good lake, and, mister, it's sweet water. Fed all the year round, I reckon, with an outlet at the lower end. More of a big pool. That's the kind of a lake for my money, too, mister. Them lakes that's fed only in the rainy season and is left to shrink and stink all Summer is nothing. I don't reckon I disturbed nobody with my singing."

"All right," I said. "What song was it?"

I sat down and dangled my legs also. I liked the man for liking my lake. The lake is my hobby and it is my delusion, as it were, that I know every fish in it by name and almost every water-insect by sight.

"What was that song you were singing?" I repeated and gave the man a cigar.

He looked at me sidelong and uttered a pleased, nervous little laugh.

"Oh, that's a rough kind of song I made up, to help me remember something."

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"Shoesmith, I suppose," I said, without thought and with no intent of any sort. It was just one of those easy, obvious things to say. But I have never seen so swift and deadly a change of front in any man as I saw in my stranger then. He bristled literally, his monstrous, unkempt beard stiffened so that each prickly-looking hair stood out—and his eyes burned suddenly and I saw, for the first time, a network of tiny red veins about the whites of them.

"That's the man, mister;" he said, in a curiously changed voice. "—— him, wherever he is! Shoesmith's the man!"

I said nothing. It did not seem necessary to apologize to a shabby tramp, trespassing on my own ground, because I had mentioned a name which he himself had cried aloud half a hundred times in the previous hour, but nevertheless I was conscious that I had disturbed his feelings.

There was a queer pause. I heard him take a sip from his can. Then he cleared his throat.

"Your name ain't Shoesmith, I s'pose, sir?" he said, his voice toned to a faintly irritating obsequiousness. It sounded as though he hated me but was trying to be polite. The voice of a man unpractised in dissimulation.

I shook my head.

"My name is Drake," I said.

He nodded. "They said so back at the village," he corroborated and lighted the cigar I had given him. His voice was natural again. For a time he smoked in silence, staring at the water. The shadows over at the far bank had joined hands and were stealing out from under the trees.

The one old heron that I tolerate on the water, despite the heavy toll he levies on my trout, rose from the upper end of the lake and flapped himself away over the trees to his roost back in the woods and the rise of the rainbow died out suddenly as it began. We sat absorbing it all. We might have been two very intimate friends who can smoke together without talking. Then, at last, my trespasser spoke.

"No, there's nothing like a lake with trees round it," he said, summing up. "Was you ever in India, Mr. Drake, sir? There's some nice pools out there. The monkeys come down to 'em, and all manner of birds. And there's deer bellin' and barkin' not far off, and wild hogs visits there. Later at night than this is, of course. And I'm speakin' of jungle pools, not tanks nor reservoirs. P'raps you've never heard a sambur come up to the water, Mr. Drake. It's kind of a big stag, very dignified, and he sort of trumpets when he's oneasy. And I seen a tiger come down and drink one night, lappin' like a cat. And there's hyenas and panthers, too. Very interesting, and—you leave them alone and they'll leave you alone. Unless it's a man-eater. And they'll usually take a native, not a white man.

"But I dunno. India's a hot and broodin' place and there ain't much peacefulness there. It was in India that me and my mates fell in with Shoesmith, Mr. Drake. The man we're lookin' for. And me and my mates are goin' to find him. We got to find him! Three of us there is—me and Collins and O'Hara, and we're dredging England for the hound. Time we've got—plenty, all the time there is. Folks call us tramps and tramps we are, but we're tramping to Shoesmith and no other. That's it, Mr. Drake, sir—Shoesmith and no other man but Shoesmith. And we shall come on to him one of these fine days.

"You'll say very likely, 'Here I see three fools walking up and down England, in and out of the parishes and districts, living like the birds of the air live, begging and borrowin', starving and drenched along with the rain, huntin' for a needle in a haystack, huntin' for a man named Shoesmith. Three born fools.' Many a man has said it and maybe many another to come, but that makes no matter to us three men, wherever we may prove to find ourselves. Because, when all's said—when all's said and done—we're going to get the man!

"All for the sake of a drink of cold water! All for just that and no other thing!"

HE GULPED at the clear lake water in his can.

"Many a Shoesmith 'ave I seen, sir, many a one and oft. Young ones and old 'uns, both men and feminine ones—there's a big body of Shoesmiths living in England, for all the noteworthy name. But we have not found the Shoesmith that sold the three men a drink of cold water in India ten years ago. Never you mind. There's time before us!

"Every parish in the south and the west and the midland part of England 'ave we

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dredged through for Shoesmith, excepting Yorkshire which is northeastern county. My mates are drawing down here, working parallel, returning from the Scotch border. If they have not found him then there's no place in England but Yorkshire where he can live. We've hunted patient for ten years and even a flea named Shoesmith, if such there was, we should not have overlooked!"

He stared at me with his patient eyes and I realized what such a search, conducted by men who had been compelled to find their living as they went, would mean—the rigors of it, the disappointments, the hopelessness.

"All for a drink of cold water Shoesmith sold us, out there in India!"

"*Sold* you?" I asked.

"Sold us, mister. Sold very dear and expensive." He laughed without mirth. "A very expensive drink that was. Onusual expensive. It was this way, sir. Back there in them old days four men—no, I tell a lie—five men, for Shoesmith was one of us then—five men they got to hear tell of rubies buried in a ruined city back behind a desert in India. They have such in that country. Ruined cities, with broken temples and palaces of marble, empty of all but the owls and the cobras and the jackals and hyenas. Perhaps there's crocodiles in the tanks.

"These are very desolate places in the night-time for a man who's been brought up to believe in ghosts and spirits. A county man from a Yorkshire village, you may say—such as I should be. And a person from Ireland such as might be named O'Hara would not be amiss if he was terrified to live in one of them old cities. Or a respectable butler with a name like Collins, who had a weakness and had suffered heavily by his weakness such as drink, would be called upon to screw himself up to visit a silent, dead city away there on the edge of the empty desert, and to explore it for rubies hidden by a queen along with her own hands. But there was three men of that kind, me and O'Hara and Collins. Ford was another, but he had no fear at all.

"When you go walkin' alone at dawn or in the dusk through a dead city, sir, and your boots rattle on the broken slabs from one end of the ruins to the other end and the jackals are all a-howlin' very mournful outside and the snakes slide in and out of the dark places and you think of the thousands of folks who lived there once, and of the queen who buried her rubies and the men who came and cut her throat soon afterward, you begin to think you've earned your share and it's valuable to you.

"You go about with your heart in your mouth and feel afraid and desperate anxious. And you look over your shoulder for no cause, if you are a decent, respectable man—only with a weakness such as drink or women. Only a gutter-bred city thief can prowl through such a place as that for a dead queen's jewels and whistle and sing comic songs on the way—a hyena from the slums like Shoesmith!

"We had come to this dead city for the rubies—five of us as I explained, and we had come across the desert that rolled all around the city. There was no water nearer than a day and a half. And so on our way there we filled up at the water-hole in the desert—enough for four days apiece—and headed across to the city. We was there in one day and a half. But it took us two days to find the rubies.

"We knew where the place to look for them was, but we had not allowed for the ruins that had fallen on that place nor for the sand that the wind had blown up and covered down upon those ruins. It was very hot weather that Summer and we worked long spells. And we got them rubies. Very beautiful precious stones. There was only four of us working when we came down to the hole where the jewels was, for Shoesmith had been knocked down by the sun that same morning and we had made him lie up in the shade.

"That came hard on us, for we had only half a day's water apiece left to give us a drink after more than one man's work apiece, and on the top of that we had a day and a half's crossing over the desert to make. All on a half-day's water apiece. We had give Shoesmith more than his share.

"We sat there on the spot where we had found the rubies until the night came, when it was a little cooler. We had to wait till it was cooler for we were afraid to go near to the water, because of our weakness, which was drink. And we had fallen to drink too many times not to know that if we got near that water we should finish it. And us with a day and a half of desert before we could get to our next drink! For in that dead city we could not find

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water—which I make no doubt was the reason why it had *become* a dead city.

"There was one tank we found, but it was green water in it and it stunk and was alive. Moreover, it was deep down and full of snakes that had fallen down there. And we consulted in the dark there and decided we would do better to strike out for the water-hole in the desert on what we had in our bottles.

"'For there's fever and malaria and dysentery and cholera and plague and everything horrible and putrid in that green water, to judge by the look of it and the smell!' says Ford. 'And if I got to die, I'd sooner die clean of wholesome thirst out in the desert than rot away here on account of poisonous water.'

"That was sense, Mr. Drake, sir, and we abided by it. And we went back to see how Shoesmith's sunstroke was and to show him his share of the rubies we had got.

"But Shoesmith he was gone—gone away, Mr. Drake!

"WE HAD left him in a kind of temple we was using to sleep in, and we had left the water there too. There was a sort of a carved stone idol sitting at one end of this temple and we had put the water on her legs. But when we looked the water was gone too. The *water* was gone!

"'Oh, my God!' says Ford. 'We're done for—done for! Rubies or no rubies, millions or nothing, it all makes no matter to us four men! We're dead 'uns! We can lie down and die here and the cobras can come and cover us up with rubies like the babes in the wood, or we can try for the water-hole in the desert and die on the road. There's no water for us this side of hell, unless we take a swig at the green stuff down the tank.'

"'Mebbe we can just make the water-hole if we start now. A man can last a long time when he's put to it,' says Collins.

"'Last!' says Ford, 'Last! By —— I'm afire now! I couldn't last for sake of the sweetest water in the world!'

"'No,' says Collins, 'but one of us *got* to last for sake of Shoesmith! He *can't* get away—he *can't*—God wouldn't let a hound like that get away! Why, we give him some of our own share to his own! Somebody's *got* to last long enough to kill Shoesmith! Come on—let's *all* last till we get him!',

"Well, there wasn't anything else to do, so we divided the rubies, in case we lasted. and started off, dark as it was. O'Hara it was who guided—O'Hara had a most wonderful gift for steerin' and findin' his way by the stars. All that night we traveled into the desert toward the water-hole, moving very slow and painful on account of the thirst. Collins said he had read about thirsty men sucking pebbles, which helped them. So we put pebbles into our mouths, but they came out as dry as they went in. And our tongues swelled all up like sausages—dry ones. We went on till the stars began to dance and shoot about the sky so that O'Hara had to stop for fear of losing the way. He turned round to us.

"'Look! They've done something to the North Star, somebody have,' he whispered. 'He can't keep to his place. How can I steer by a star that don't stand still? Let's lay down.'

"And we all laid down and watched the stars dancing quadrilles, as Collins, who knowed about dances, said they were. But it looked more like Catherine-wheels to me. And our tongues went on swellin'.

"But we moved on again a bit before the sun rose and we done very well for a time. O'Hara reckoned that another six hours would get us to the water, but Ford he only laughed.

"'Six hours!' he whispered out of his black lips. 'None of us'll last more than another two hours,' he says. 'Six years ain't any likelier. Why, I been goin' mad half the night and now I'm gone!'

"And with that he bites into his arm and—drinks. The blood ran down his chin till he licked it off like a cat. And then the sun rises suddenly up into the sky and knocks him down where he stood, as dead as a stone. I never seen a man die that fashion before nor since. He had burnt himself out, as Collins said.

"So we left him there—along with his share of the rubies. It was not worth the trouble of takin' them off his body. And it didn't look as if they was likely to be any good to any of us. We steps it headin' into the eye of that blazin', blindin' sun—and half an hour afterward Collins drops like a log. Not dead, but dyin'.

"'Water's the only thing for *him*,' says O'Hara. 'Don't wait. Keep on for the water and we can bring it back to him—if we ever get there. It can't be

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far now. The kites won't hurt him till he's dead,' he says, for the birds come slidin' and whistlin' down the sky almost afore Collins had hit the ground. But all the same we bandaged his eyes in case the kites felt tempted for them, and left him there.

"We made a few more miles, me and O'Hara, and then O'Hara kneels down on the sand very low and without notice or warnin.'

"'My God, I'm goin', Uncle!' says he—they called me 'Uncle' because I used to sing 'em a Devonshire song named 'Uncle Tom Cobley'—'and you've the last perishing chance!' He puts his hand up to shelter his eyes and stares ahead, swayin' to and fro. 'Look, Uncle —— you, look!' I looked and I couldn't see anything but sand and sunlight.

"'There's trees there!' says O'Hara, swinging to and fro like a clock pendulum. 'Go straight to 'em, take a little drink and fill the bottles and come back,' he says, and with that down he goes on his face.

"I pushes on.

"THAT was a wonderful day for me, Mr. Drake, sir. Sometimes I thought I was walking on a gentle medder, with cowslips and dandelions swishing round my legs; sometimes I reckoned I was wanderin' across cool plowed fields; once I fell down and tried to swim till the sand burnt me face; and then I seemed to be walkin' in the dark. It was dark, only the darkness had deep edges of quiverin', whitehot light, and every now and then red and purple jags of lightin' would rip across this burnin' darkness for a while. Then all at once I seen the trees—I seen 'em standing clean and clear round the water-hole!

"'By gosh, I've done it!' I says. I fell down again, but I struggled up and drags on toward the water.

"And then a man as big as a mountain, with eyes like great rubies and a face like silver, blocks the way. He shoves out an arm that looks like the arm of a giant and with a great pink-colored fist on it the size of a baby, clutchin' round a shinin' revolver.

"'What, Uncle!' he says, and I knows him to be Shoesmith.

"'Water!' I says.

"'Sure, take a drink'—and he hands me a bottle with about a quarter of a pint in it, no more.

"I hardly tasted it—but it cleared me eye and me wind.

"'I been watchin' you,' says Shoesmith, 'wobbling like the loose hind wheel of a wagon. If I hadn't come out to you, Uncle, you'd have died in a minute or two. Where's the others? Dead?'

"'Ford is,' I says. 'But a drink'd save Collins and O'Hara.'

"'Well, take 'em a drink,' he says.

"I shut my eyes tight, for the darkness was a-closin' in round me once more and the colored lightin' was flickerin' and dancin' through me head again.

"'I can't,' I says. 'And you know it, Shoesmith—you murderer!' And with this I feels myself fallin'.

"Shoesmith bends over me.

"'You lyin', scandalous dog,' he whispers, 'you call me a murderer? Didn't I give you water? Now you shall pay for it! I ain't no *bhisti* [water-carrier]. Where's your rubies?'

"I felt his hungry hands go pluckin' and flutterin' and feelin' all over me until they settled on the rubies—which they took. Then Shoesmith whispers in my ear again.

"'Give me these silly stones for one good drink, Uncle,' he says. 'Will you do it? One good drink and a bottle-full sluiced over your head. Will you do it?'

"What was *rubies* to me? Nothing but hot stones that hurt the back of a man's eyes to look at. Red, burnin' things.

"'I will, Shoesmith,' I says, and feels the bottle at my mouth again. It was only a taste he give me then, but, 'This is just to to keep you goin', he says. 'I've got to do business with Collins and O'Hara yet. You can have your sluice when I get back.'

"And he was gone—back to find them other two men!

"That was what he done to 'em both. Worked over 'em out in that blindin' desert like a doctor till they'd got sense enough back to give up all they'd risked their lives for—to give up the rubies just for the sake of the drink he'd stole from 'em. Collins he brought back to O'Hara somehow and left 'em with a bottle of water between 'em to do the best they could.

"But he never went back for Ford. Ford's bones and rubies is there still—just as the kites and the jackals left 'em—for all I know.

"Shoesmith emptied a bottle over me as

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he passed back to the water-hole and that was the last I knowed of him.

"I made the water-hole about two hours afterward. I had fallen further from it than I reckoned, and after a rest I went out to help O'Hara and Collins in. After a sleep we was improved and eat some of the grub we had stored there. We did not talk much. There wasn't much to talk about. We seen how it was and how that 'ound Shoesmith had laid his plans.

"HE'D left us at the dead city and, takin' all the water with him, had struck out for the water-hole. He reckoned very correct and close. He judged we should try for the water-hole, bringin' the rubies with us, and miss it by a few miles. Then, knowin' he'd have nothing to fear from three dyin' men, he'd come out to find us and get our rubies in exchange fer the water he would bring. Then, having got the stones, he'd leave the water-hole at once and get on across the desert to the railway and make his way out of the country.

"The thief knew it'd take us a day or two to get strength enough to foller him. He had so planned it, Mr. Drake, and had done it so, too—all correct and accurate. Except for Ford. He had not reckoned on Ford dyin'. He did not want to be a murderer, only a water-seller. But Ford made a murderer of him and that's why we each got one of these!"

The man indicated something that lay on the landing-stage at his side. I had not noticed it before.

It was a well-handled rope, supple, greasy, strong. There was something inexpressibly sinister in the look of it, after the story I had just heard.

"But you don't mean——" I began. He saw what I meant in my eyes, I suppose, for he nodded.

"It ain't nobody's business but ours, Mr. Drake," he said, gentle and apologetic.

There was a silence. "Uncle" took another luxurious sip from his can.

"I shall join up with O'Hara here to-night, and Collins'll very likely'll come in to-morrow. Would you mind us sleepin' in the boat-house, Mr. Drake, sir? We should be cautious not to scratch no varnish. There's plenty barns about, but we all feels the same way about lakes and streams."

I handed over the key to the boat-house. It seemed little enough to give. I had some loose silver. That went with the key. I was uncomfortable, for I could not shake my mind free from the conviction that Sir John Shoesmith—my wealthy neighbor, whose huge, new, stone mansion up on the hill dominated the district—was the Shoesmith Uncle and his comrades sought. I had dined with the man often. I had never liked him, never disliked him. I suddenly remembered that Sir John had often said that he would like to see India, conveying, by that, the impression that he had never been there. And yet, I decided now, he looked as most white men look who have lived in India. And there are few who escape the hall-mark of the country.

Again I heard it said, in business, that he was cruel and unscrupulous. But all that was nothing. There was something more tangible than that. I stared across the lake and asked casually what was the name of Shoesmith the water-seller.

"Name, sir? Jack we called him."

"But would you know him again if you saw him? Ten years alter a man."

Uncle laughed—not mirthfully.

"Know him, Mr. Drake, sir? Listen; about five foot six high, narrow across the shoulders, straight and light-colored hair, long nose with blue gunpowder spot on the side, a scar running into the hair across the left temple, light mustache, smallish ears that don't curl in much at the edges—flat, I mean, wide feet, the top off the little finger on the right hand, bad teeth, sharp stick-out chin, eyes kind of yellow-gray, and a little black mole just under the jawbone on the left side of the throat.

"That's a rough idea of the man from which I shouldn't expect you or anybody to recognize him. If there was any chance of you knowing him, then I could give you a *full* description, for we know that man, sir, hair by hair, scar by scar, mark by mark. Either of us could pick him from a regiment or a division or an army of Shoesmiths!"

The man suddenly stretched out his hand. He had described Sir John Shoesmith to the life.

"Know him, sir! If we were blind and deaf and dumb we should know him by instinct if ever he approached us! Why? Because he taught us himself. Have you ever patted a strange dog, sir, and passed on? If you have, in two days you have forgotten what that dog was like. But if the dog had bitten your hand through

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would you have forgotten him all your life? You wouldn't. We shall remember Shoesmith, for he learned us how to remember him—learned us very throughly!"

I SUPPOSE it was wrong—I have been told many times it was wrong—and I offer no excuse. But the man and his story had gripped me. I pointed him up the hill where the lights of Sir John Shoesmith's big house were burning yellow through the dusk.

"Shoesmith lives there!" I said, and Uncle scrambled to his feet, making a sharp, dry sound in his throat. "He's dying there, too—typhoid fever," I added.

Uncle was looking at the lights as he might have looked at the rubies of the dead queen as they came up from their hiding-place. Then a man came treading quietly through the gloom and approached the landing-stage.

"Uncle!" he called softly, with a vague Irish accent, and I knew that the newcomer was O'Hara—O'Hara, who had the wonderful gift of steering by the stars. How he had known that his comrade was on my landing-stage, or by what instinct he had found him I do not pretend to explain.

Uncle looked over his shoulder.

"He's *there*, O'Hara—*there!*" he said, and pointed to the lights on the hillside. I saw O'Hara stiffen and stare like a pointer.

Even as we looked, two of the lights of the first floor dimmed, as though some one in the house had pulled down two blinds. Almost immediately afterward the sound of a suddenly started motor-engine whirred down to us from the house. We watched the distant haze of pale moving light from the car lamps slide forward as the motor dropped down the drive.

"That's the doctor," I said. "He can tell us how Shoesmith is to-night." But I knew—I was sure that Shoesmith was dead.

I turned and went down the long drive that leads out to the main road. The others followed silently, like shadows. The car came along and I signalled Bryant, the doctor's driver. He pulled up and I put my head in at the window. The shadows were at my shoulders.

"Well, doctor, how is Sir John?" I asked.

"Died half an hour ago," said the doctor reluctantly.

"Is there any danger of an epidemic in the village?" I questioned, and the shadows pressed closer, listening.

The doctor laughed.

"None whatever. It was the awful water-supply and sanitary arrangements at the new house," he said. "The people who did the work should be flogged. Man, the water there was rank poison!"

I heard two long indrawn sighs of utter content behind me. That last must have been music to the listeners.

"It was the water that killed him?" I persisted.

"Nothing else," said the doctor. The end of his cigar glowed red as he pulled vindictively at it. "Nothing else," he repeated.

I said good-night and stood away as the car rolled forward.

Then I turned to the others.

But they were gone—silently, unobtrusively as they had come. I never saw them again. But I heard some weeks after that on the following morning, three ropes—each with a noose at the end—had been found on the floor of the room in which Sir John Shoesmith's body had lain that night! Nobody knew how they had got there, nor could any one suggest why they had been so placed. But that was because nobody knew the story Uncle had told me down there by the lake while Shoesmith was dying.

In the light of that tragic history I could picture them retreating softly from the doctor's car to the landing-stage. I saw the later coming of Collins, also guided by that strange instinct for finding his comrades which the last ten years had developed, and I was able to guess the whispered consultation, the silent approach to the big house on the hill, the stealthy entry to the chamber of the dead man and the keen rapt scrutiny of the cold face. They had seen it last in the hot, dazzling light of the Indian desert; they saw it now by the feeble rays of a candle-end or a match—and the illumination of their unforgotten agony. But they had known it!

And they had left their ropes upon the floor. They had carried them for ten bitter years, but the time had come at last when they could lay them down and leave them.

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A SWIM IN CHINA

by Arthur E. McFarlane

IT IS now some five years since three men of Pittsburg and New York, by the employment of all the methods known to higher finance, obtained the sacred imperial sanction for the building and operating of a railroad through four provinces of central China.

The said railroad was to run from one inland Celestial metropolis of a million to another of a million and a half—as it might be, leaving out the Celestial, from St. Louis to Chicago. Two of the provinces to be opened up must undoubtedly, in coal and iron, prove for China what Pennsylvania and upper Michigan are for these United States.

The franchise, as obtained, was exclusive and perpetual. It was subject only to "the continued favor of the assembled deities," which, in Chinese documents corresponds inversely to "the act of God" in an old-line fire policy—something rendered entirely negligible, it need not be said, by the small-print paragraphs below.

In brief, those three financiers could sit back and, looking Eastward, see so much money that, in Othello's phrase, their flesh ached at it. Then, the matter of the franchise safely settled, they followed their custom and made provision for the practise of all due economies in construction work.

In the first locating and surveying parties sent up that river of sampans, the unskilled labor—the rod-men, stake-drivers, and the like—learned early that, unless they were to stop eating altogether, from thirty to forty per cent. of their wages must be checked back into the Company's treasury for "special supplies"—at quadruple prices. So, too, for tobacco, medicines, boots, clothing, waterproof blankets.

When you have taken men five hundred miles inland (with down fares on the supply boats prohibitive), if you are of one order of business mind, it will be impossible for you to conceive of arranging the situation in any other way. It is something, too, which you might say men look for and expect. They reckon on being given the chance to buy a few extras when they want them, when they hire out. All of which, of course, is one of the oldest stories in the world. And it is brought in here only because it is necessary to the telling of the present story, which is a new one. It is about three half-fed, foot-weary, gaunt, Adam's-appled and inexpressibly homesick young Hoosiers, who, with every reason in the world, wanted a swim.

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Their names were Truman Bush, George Long and Lafe McHenry. They came from Indiana and from the same back township in Indiana. They were all alike primitively simple in up-bringing and profoundly lacking in education. They had reached land at Shanghai via the Philippines, whither they had gone to make their fortunes! And they had hired out with that Chinese-railroad building company in the belief that they could thereby earn the money that would take them home again. No doubt they would, too, within five years, or at most in six or seven. But, for the time, their minds had almost ceased to dwell on that for something else.

Having been raised right, hardly less compelling in them than the instinct to eat was the instinct to keep clean. And the facilities for keeping clean have generally been considered human essentials; they are arrangeable, even in China. But not in that surveying camp. By some Hoosier miracle the three did manage to perform regular ablutions. Almost alone among their fellows they did so. But what their souls yearned and thirsted for was sweet water, flowing and in quantity. And this ended by mixing with and becoming the very voice of their homesickness.

"We ain't makin' no kick again' the provender," George Long put it to the Chief, "nor again' the hold-backs, nor again' nothin' that-a-way, though I reckon you know whether we might or not. But, come the hot-weather Sundays like this, back home we'd jest naturally be gittin' together after church and strikin' off down the back line to Boone's Bush, and hittin' the creek at Mayne's or Dearborn's Hole, and havin' our week's swim."

"And all we want," said Bush, "an' what, by cracks, it seems like it's in our rights to ask fer, is the chance, come Sundays, to tramp it in the right direction and git that swim in *now!*"

The Chief said it was a fine idea. Their Sundays were their own. They could go right ahead.

"But, Jove!" said one of his assistants shiftingly, when the three had gone, "if I know anything about this putrefied country, they can tramp it in the right direction, going and coming, and not find a place they can swim in, from here to Canton."

"Certainly," and the Chief went back to his work again; "but it'll ease their souls a lot to give them every chance to try."

II

THEY were then working from a camp on the north side of a navigable river as large as the Ohio. Above them there sprawled and smelled a city bigger than Buffalo. And, accordingly, the condition of the water below it was about that of Buffalo harbor.

To Lafe McHenry, however, this meant that "like enough, on the yon side, she'd be found runnin' as clear as the old home creek herself."

And they plugged their way around a four-mile loop only to find, of course, that on that "yon side" they got the full flow and contribution of the next town above.

Yet the week after, when every one moved up one hike, with a re-birth of hope they pulled their feet through five miles of the gluey *loess* of China's ditch roads to try the river above that next town again. Again they came back heads down, beaten out. On the third Sunday they started to follow small and tributary streams.

"Onct hit one o' them," said Bush, "where there's nothin' between it and its rise but rice-medder or Chink willers, an' it *couldn't* be so bad."

And in silent, back-country doggedness they set themselves to hit one so.

All this, let it be remembered, was in addition to the gruelling daily slog, from Monday to Saturday, with the leveling-rods. After two more Sundays the Chief himself could not but note their looks.

"What you lads need a lot more than a swim," he said, "unless you want to be left out here, is your regular week's rest."

"Yes," said Long, "an' good food that don't put ye in debt to pay fer. But, meanwhiles, we're allowin' to find a swim!"

It was then they came gradually to know that in China nine hundred and ninety-nine creeks in every thousand take their rise in duck-ponds. But, heavily and inarticulately, they still kept on. Perhaps, the way their homesickness took them, they were incapable of stopping.

And then, in a very notable event, Truman Bush, George Long and Lafe McHenry were for the time forgotten.

The one member of that Pittsburg and New York syndicate who had not seen the

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Chinese El Dorado in the beginning came over to see it for himself.

And he saw it now as his predecessors had not seen it. Acting on good consular advice, he had taken a house-boat. House-boats are among the things of luxury in China. And towed about by a flat-bottomed, Glasgow-built little side-wheeler, he took in the unceasing land and water traffic, the endless square miles of maize and rice and oil beans. He saw solid bituminous cropping out in seven-foot seams even on the river bluffs, and, up one of the brown-running branches, fifty miles of hematite to out-sample anything in the Gogebic.

"Gee whiz!" he said. "And coolies to be had by the millions for their feed in 'skilly'! In twenty years we'll have the Standard Oil bunch looking like pikers!"

He was still this side of middle age and he could look forward to that. There are certain hours when we feel that we are enjoying "the favor of the assembled deities."

The day he tied up off the go-down of our surveying camp, three of its rod-men were away. It was a Sunday and they had acknowledged themselves, "prett' nigh all in." But they had ended, automatically, by once more making a hike to find that swim.

And, when they had ceased to hope for anything themselves, that day they found it!

They found it by losing their way and wandering into a Chinese landscape which was strikingly, and from every viewpoint, new to them.

No longer were they skirting unending, vile-smelling, little irrigation canals. They had come out upon something that was really a road, broad and stone-paved. It ran through soft, rolling lawn and was lined by trees so huge and old that many of them had split into mere hollow-shelled fragments. Between them, here and there, stood moss-covered statues of near-animals, as big as elephants. And nowhere was there any village in sight, not even a farmsty.

A little farther and the road had begun to be measured, at regular intervals, by worn, gray, marble slabs, protected by worn little stone roofs like lich-gates. In the uprights of those gates inscriptions had been cut. And upon every tenth or twentieth gate a paper had been fixed which had once been thickly gilded.

At that, George Long was almost ready to worry himself. "Cracks, I don't like the look o' them notices. Supposin', after all, it's some sort of a park, or a picnic grove?"

"Then, if it is," retorted Lafe McHenry, "it's one they've give up usin'. Lord, you can see sole leather ain't broke this road in a year!"

And again they went on. The big trees thickened and closed in on the road till they walked in a dark-green twilight. The road itself became a soft and silent woods path.

"Jinks!" said Bush, "I'll never tell you where we're gittin' to. Even the air's got a kind of a sort of a ——"

He did not finish.

"*Jimmyo-o!*"

On the other side of a wide, shadow-gloomed and level stretch of sandy moss their road came to an end in such a swimming-hole as was never seen before even by a Hoosier! Other foot-ways came out upon it, too. But the three had no eyes for them. They saw only its width and depth, its visible depth under the other bank; and on that other bank, shaded by ancient willows, a row of big carved stones set up at just the ideal diving height!

"Do—do we chance her?" asked George Long.

"Do we chance her? Gosh, what 'a' we been lookin' fer since Spring!" shrieked Truman Bush.

"Aw say," said McHenry gaspingly; "Aw, say! But what if she's spring-cold?"

"Naw, she ain't spring-cold, neither," said Truman, who had already got a hand into it and was now peeling. "She ain't spring cold, nor she ain't milk warm. She's jest dead righty right!"

III

THE sun was dropping low. But again they frogged it in, and did "dead-man's-dives" and "part-the-hair" and caught each other by the ankles and passed around ecstatic smacks. Then sitting down, waist-deep in the willow shade, they watched their thin legs rise mysterious and snake-like to the surface. Far off in the woods a bird—it sounded like a Peabody sparrow—was singing.

"Pyore happiness, might' nigh!" moaned Lafe McHenry.

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"See me jest *waller* in it!" broke in Truman.

"An' don't it show that every place kin be sort o' home, onct ye git a-holt of it right?" continued Lafe.

"It surely does! Jinks, an' water-skaters, too! That's all right, now, leetle fellers. No need to git askairt whatever. Ain't none of us here'd hurt ye, not fer forty dollars!"

Ten minutes more and they were standing off what seemed to be all the yelling red-umbrella men, all the jibbering "jossers," all the screeching, gold-placarded chair-bearers in China!

There had been no time to dress. They had barely had the time to get their clothes to the cover of some flanking willows. And now, as Bush and McHenry managed feverishly to jerk themselves into their nether raiment, from two gilded chairs in the middle of the procession, fell a pair of weazened old gentlemen in lemon-colored wrappers. They squawked once like shot parrots, then went down on their faces. And they rose only to go into hysterical, falsetto paroxysms!

"My—a—Lordy, what's the matter with them, anyways! Gosh, George, you got to come! You got to come withouten, the way you are!"

"I can't!" shouted George from the water. "No man's got the nerve even to run, this-a-way!"

Again and again Long tried for a pant-leg which, having been pulled inside out, seemed wholly to have disappeared.

All the time he kept up a steady volley of words, hurled across the water.

"You dast, now! What's the matter, what's the matter with ye? If you're the fellers that owns the place, an' you don't want us here, you've only jest got to—— We're goin', we're tellin' ye, we're goin'! Jest as soon as I can git these ad-dratted, doublety-danged pants on! Cracks, I knowed there was somethin' queer about this place, right from the beginnin'!"

A second time the two lemon-clothed ancients were prostrated by that spiritual epilepsy. And this time they flailed their heads upon the ground like mauls!

"My sakes!" cried Bush, all but going to their rescue himself, "Did anybody ever see such goin's on! You old geezers is goin' to do yourselves a damage! Fellers, they're bug! They're all of them bug! George, you got to come!"

And it was well that by now George was among the semi-ready. Together the three struck the "jossers" on the left. The chair-bearers flung themselves in; but they had not the use of their poles. And the red-umbrella men seemed able only to use their nails. Frenziedly giving and taking, the three battered their way through. Their unlaced shoes hung on them like clogs and they kicked them off. It was their one piece of good fortune that they came out in sight of the road by which they had come in. And, with shouts of raging innocence, they ran and ran and ran!

IV

IF ANY explanation should still be needed, it may be said that every district in China has its sacred pool or holy hill, consecrated to the omnipotent Fung Shui, or gods of wind and water. But there are two pools, or at most, three, the sacro-sanctity of which can not be expressed in Occidental language. In the matter of the pool above, enough that when one of the Imperial Princes, or Brothers of the Son of Heaven, visits a Great Central Viceroy, they make a state pilgrimage to it; and the former is permitted to dip his first and second finger in and sprinkle the latter in order that he and his posterity may live blessed forever.

It was, in fact, this ceremony that was about to take place upon the present occasion. And the Great Central Viceroy and the Brother of the Son of Heaven had arrived in time to be all but witnesses of a sacrilege so infinite, so unspeakable, that it would be four hundred days before it could be brought to the knowledge of the Son of Heaven himself.

When it was brought to his knowledge, the building of one Chinese railroad would, in every probability, be postponed during "the pollution of one thousand years."

Meanwhile, within thirty-six hours a certain up-river surveying party had taken a bruised refuge in a near-by house-boat, there to await their chance of getting down to the coast. And, the day after, red of eye and sore of limb and unshaven, three Hoosiers stood on the deck of a little customs launch, which, as a first measure of safety, was to rush them for Shanghai and the first steamer for America.

From the hour of their withdrawal from

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the bilgy darkness of the house-boat's three-foot hold they had been fighting; first with the Assistant Chief and his subs, who at every repetition of their just demand "to be learned, as man to man, what they'd done," had only fanned them away speechlessly and as if they had brought down the celestial firmament; then with the great man from New York and Pittsburg himself, and those who, to their own cost, had come to his assistance; and finally with all and sundry who still continued to believe the baseness of the accusation that had been brought against them. Nay, as the launch pulled out, they were still defending themselves.

"We're sayin' to you again, we never polluted nothin'! We don't know what ye mean by pollute! All we had back a-yonder was jest a plain, old-fashioned swim! The only fellers we hit was fellers that hit us first. And them two old geezers we never hit at all! If there's only one place in all China where a feller kin swim, an' we ain't to be allowed to swim in it, we're glad and thankful to go. But to be goin' back this-a-way, in our sock-feet——"

Above the noise of propeller and exhaust their voices still rose high and infuriate. "All we went out fer—fer the last time do ye hear us tellin' ye?—all we went out fer, an' all we had, was a swim! An', by cracks, if there's sech a thing as law to be had, this here is goin' to end by costin' you fellers money!"

THE GIRL AND THE JUNGLE

by

Thomas Samson Miller*

STILL, hot, white noon and deep silence reigned over village and trading compound. Even the jungle parrots had ceased their incessant shrieking. Harris, acting-agent, perspired on his mattress, his gray eyes fixed in dream reverie on a photograph on the board wall of a sweet, demure girl with blue eyes, stub nose and freckles. His sister had sent the picture, as, so Harris suspected, a bribe for some half-promised marabout feathers.

The youth himself had not dared ask the girl for the photograph—their acquaintanceship had not been that far advanced when the budding romance was nipped by his sailing orders for the Niger. Perhaps the romance blossomed all the richer in his idealisms, at which he was rather apt. In his palmed

* See page 380

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solitudes he managed to endow the wistful little face with all his inspirations of modesty, dependence, coyness and gentility. That was the kind of girl that Harris worshiped.

He smiled into the blue eyes and thought of the tennis game and the walk home in the soft, white twilight of his homeland, as only exiles think of these things. Suddenly his dreams were jarred by a prolonged and wobbly steamer's siren. He was off his couch and out on the veranda in one movement.

Out of the blinding heat-waves of the diamond-dazzled river waltzed a stern-wheeler—the same stern-wheeler whose recent maiden voyage had so consternated the superstitious Igobians. He lost no time reaching the river bank, nor did he wait for the gangplank, but hurled himself aboard the instant the boat nosed the mud. The Captain-engineer greeted him with a poke in the ribs and sly dropping of left eyelid.

"Ah've brocht ye a veesitor—a young lady fr'm Californy. She's a handsome and lively baggage with a nutty notion of studying what she calls the 'Mystic Moon Dance of the Devil Worshipers!'"

Poor Harris, caught on a youth's twelve months' hunger for the face, voice, soul of white woman, felt the telltale color warming his cheeks and turned his face from the other's cynical penetration. Then his heart stood suddenly still. A girl's pebbly, happy trilling of a "silvery-moon-night-in-June-spoon" ditty rang from a cabin. Never did song-thrush listen to the call of its mate as Harris listened to that song. In that moment the face in his sleeping-room vanished into oblivion. Then his extravagant sentiment was jarred by the familiar way the Captain called to the girl to come and be introduced. But the girl took no offense; sang back, "All right!" The next moment she burst on impressionable Harris in all her ample beauty.

Tall as himself she was, but fuller—round on round of soft white flesh and big, black, lively eyes that met his without a trace of embarrassment, and a soft supple hand that gripped his like a boy's, while the rather large and wicked mouth smiled frank pleasure. Such *sang-froid* radiance struck Harris dumb. The Captain came facetiously to his aid.

"You kind o' dazzle him, Miss Amy. Ye'll hae tae be vera cautious or ye'll hae him desperately in love with ye, which'll no fit in wi' your grand ambeetions, Ah'm thinking." He followed up with informal introduction:

"Miss Dale, Mr. Harris."

But the Captain did not give him any time to dally with sentiment.

"Ye'll hae tae get a hustle on your niggers, Mr. Harris,"—he was addressing the agent on business or he would have said, "Boy,"—"I've got to get away by sundown, or I sh'an't make the bar."

So it was a hard afternoon's work among his happy, smelling savages, which put a temporary cap on emotion, until sundown, when the last negro dumped his head-load of rubber into the steamer's hold and lines were cast off. At the last moment the Captain-engineer hailed Harris to the bridge and thrust a present into his hand, explaining that it was a rifle muffler. He showed him how to use it by fixing it to his own rifle and drawing a bead on a crocodile sunning on a sand-bank. Harris scarcely believed the evidence of his senses. He saw the bullet ricochet from the saurian's horny back and splash on the river, and saw the beast back away to river bottom; but there was neither smoke nor report to evidence the firing.

He saw at once the value of this, and his thanks were effusive. But it was to save himself the embarrassment of those thanks that Scott had reserved the present for the last moment that he might sound the engine-room gong and escape. Harris had to leap ashore.

"Dinna think too much of yon missy, or ye'll wreck your soulship on her ambeetions," warned the Captain.

Harris was too excited to be very curious just then as to these ambitions and when he presently met the girl at "chop," he, in the little white cutaway mess-jacket he so seldom had excuse to wear, she, in her cool largeness, with her gay chatter that took him into intimate comradeship right away, the warning was forgotten. Her talk was all of herself, and might have been repellent were it not entirely void of self-consciousness or conceit and so curiously entertaining in its exposure of her bizarre public life.

"I'm just crazy to dance!" she trilled. "Spot me in the limelight and I'll draw more enthusiasm than Elbert Hubbard before a teachers' club. Say, you watch out for Iris St. Claire. That's to be my stage name

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when I'm the 'Divine Interpreter of the Moon Dance of Ju-juism.'" Pushing back her soup-plate, leaning her round chin in her palms, propped on plump elbows, unmindful of the havoc she was making of his feminine ideal, she rattled on. "It's like this. Way out in San Francisco is Mrs. Howard Bayliss with a bug to be IT in society and putting up a fight against Mrs. Phelan-Crocker. Well, last Winter, 'Pin-Cushion'—that's Mrs. Phelan-Crocker—put one over 'Hot Buns'—Mrs. Howard Bayliss—when she imported a Hindu temple, lock, stock and barrel, which means idols, grills, altars, dancing-girls and pie-faced Hindus, and set up her temple in the live-oaks behind the 'varsity and started proselyting among the co-eds for devotees for the imported cult of Blessed Nirvana.

"Maybe you've heard of Sarah Klein, or Lily Lovelace, as she is known to the stage? No; but there, you're buried alive out here. Sarah is IT. She's the 'Inspired Interpreter of the Death Dance of the Juggernauts.' She has sent Salome to the scrap-heap, and her sponsor, Pin-Cushion, is IT. Now you catch on to me, eh? I'm under the patronage of Hot Bun's dollars; I'm going to import the Ju-ju cult; a year from now I hit the boards as the 'Inspired Interpreter of the Devil Dance of the Fetish Worshipers.' It's a winner! Back in the States they're starving for mysticism, and it's me to supply the demand, with the slickest press-agent to tote me along. But what's the matter?" she exclaimed, staring into his bewildered face.

THE youth was asking himself what was the matter. The girl was so fascinatingly unlike anything he had ever dreamed of that she captured his heart in spite of a subtle sense of disappointment and innate disagreement with her. Her ambitions smacked of charlatanism, though in herself she was frankness and naturalness to the point of embarrassment, and her free gestures would block her chance of graduating from a finishing school. But he was not sure enough of himself to find open fault with her, so he forced a smile, with which she was easily satisfied.

"The scheme is my own," she continued. "I happened on the idea in a book on the West African Ju-ju by an Oxford dry-as-dust. But wait; I'll get it."

She was gone on the word, returning at once, turning the leaves of a book which she laid open by his plate and, leaning her face disconcertingly close to his, read aloud: "'The night was full moon. The dancers were young females, every one a sculptured Eve in bronze. To low tom-toming and reed-piping the females indulged sinuous motions of their buoyant bodies, gradually working themselves into a hypnotic state that induced epilepsy. The whole scene was weird and barbaric beyond——'"

The young woman suddenly snapped the book shut.

"Fudge! Sculptured Eves in bronze! Sa—ay; look at me!" She struck a pose in the middle of the room, frightening the waiting boys, who thought she was "making Ju-ju" and fled incontinently. "Look at me," she insisted, and waited until he raised his eyes off his plate. "When it comes to sculptured Eves haven't I got 'em beaten to a finish? You can't get away from physical culture. Why, mama took me in hand when I was a baby; at four years old I swooped the first prize at a baby show; at seventeen I was Queen of the Raisin Carnival in our valley, then Queen of the Native Daughters' Fiesta, and that isn't all either. Wait; I'll show you something!"

Again she was gone and returned in a breathing space. With a flourish she unrolled a poster so that the light of the big brass lamp fell full on it. Harris gasped and looked away, but returned to it in sheer desperation. He saw a daring beer-poster, wherein the girl's feline body was gracefully revealed in scant red drapery that contrasted the white plumpness of her bare arms and open throat; her right hand held up invitingly an amber and frothing glass of beer, while her eyes teased between veiled lashes, and her ripe red lips toasted—as you pleased. Harris hated the picture at first sight, yet could not say why he hated it.

The girl was sublimely unconscious of this—looked around for a nail and, finding one over the sideboard, hung the poster there, remarking, "There, now you have something nice to look at instead of horrid bare walls."

She resumed her interrupted dinner and chatter, easily charming away his disagreement with her, even as she charmed away all thought of the photo in the next room and the Captain's soulship warning. Her ambitions ran away with her. Already her morrow was planned; she announced her

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intention of going into the village early in the morning, before the sun was too high, to get some photographs for what she called her Sunday Page.

"Sunday Page?" he questioned, with a depressing premonition of some challenge to his visionary ideal of woman.

"Yes, I've got to work up a page for my press-agent. Perhaps I'll have an adventure that will make a good write-up story! What do you think?"

He thought she might get all the adventure she wanted, and more than was healthy for her, if she went around poking her camera at the superstitious Africans. He warned her also of the rude life she might encounter, but without alarming her.

"Goodness," she shrilled, "I'm not going to be shocked! I'm not a missionary. I suppose you have your work to do and can't come with me?"

"Work!" he cried gaily. "The compound runs like clockwork after I have given the natives the day's routine. I'll call you."

But she was astir at the first throb of the tom-tom that mustered the station at daybreak. She wore a serviceable field khaki riding-coat and short skirt, and her black head was neat in a pith helmet. She swung a camera in her hand. As she sipped her chocolate and nibbled at the muddy-colored spudgy balls that the cook served for rolls the youth watched her, thinking that she looked very practical, capable and independent, and he suffered a little conscience pang of traitorship for the old ideal of gentle dependence which she dimmed. Then they set out for the village, he having to hurry himself out of his measured African stride to keep up with her swinging gait.

He tried to get a step ahead to shield her from the open domesticity and toiletting of the village, in which the girl, however, exhibited a naïve and unembarrassed business interest. Her camera was busy catching what she called "background" to her stage dance and she worried him continually to barter for the things that struck her as good "property." The skull-festooned hut of the witch-doctor especially evoked her enthusiasm. She snapped her camera on it, and was urging the youth to buy the whole thing as it stood, when suddenly the grotesque wizard himself appeared and the girl went off into unrestrained peal on peal of laughter.

"YOU should not laugh at him," he said.

"He is so funny!" she gulped.

He soberly admonished her, "Perhaps; but then one of our archbishops would appear as funny to him. He has feelings and is perfectly serious in his get-up."

But she was not heeding him. "Speak to him!" she cried. "Ask him if he'll sell that funny head-dress and all those charm things. I simply must have them! Tell him not to jump around so; I want to get a picture for my Sunday Page. Goodness! What's coming over him?" she gasped, as the offended wizard shook his mace at her and groaned curses and malediction, then suddenly popped back into his hut; whereat the unmoved maiden gasped, "Well, now, what do you think of that!"

"You've done it now," said Harris seriously. "He'll watch his chance to get that back on you. What did you want to laugh at him for?" he irritably demanded, really worried for her safety.

"Oh," she cried, "are you mad at me?" She slipped her warm arm through his, with friendly pressure, so that his irritation with her vanished at once, as did her brief contrition vanish in her dominant passion for "background."

"Where is the fetish grove? We must take that in," she enthused, as if she were a Cook's tourist doing Europe's cathedrals.

He answered a little sulkily.

"It lies in the big mahoganies, down in a hollow about an hour behind the village, Miss Dale."

"You will take me to it, won't you?" She trained her expressive eyes on him and pressed his linking arm. "And don't 'Miss Dale' me," she added. "What is your first name?"

"Arthur."

"Arthur it is!" she cried flippantly. "When will you take me to the fetish grove, Arthur?" She slipped her hand down his arm, closing her cool fingers on his wrist.

He was suddenly eager to be her guide.

"We'll go this afternoon, when the heat is gone. I have a little work to do in the compound. But you must promise not to come to the village by yourself at any time."

"Why?"

He hesitated to translate the wizard's curses and put her on guard against certain mischief in that quarter, and in the end decided to spare her, assuming a romantic

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pose of guardianship over his fair guest. He invented a reason.

"I don't think it is proper for you to wander alone in the village; there are sights that—that aren't proper."

"You are a funny boy," she lightly commented.

But he was really alarmed and his fears got a bad stimulus when they reached the compound and crossed to the chop-room where the first thing he saw was that some one had turned the picture face to the wall.

Suspecting some mischievous superstition at work, he started for the gong that called together the houseboys, but on second thought went over to the sheet-iron barracks, where he could "hold palaver" without alarming the girl. The stubbornness of the denials of one and all of having touched the picture confirmed his suspicion of some rooted superstition at work. Igobo had never before seen a picture, and it was not unlikely that it got a reputation of being the girl's familiar spirit.

His alarm intensified, especially when he discovered that the episode with the witch-doctor was already known and resented in compound. He intuitioned some superstitious connection between the wizard's rage and the turning of the picture, an intuition that received sharp confirmation at lunch, when he saw the houseboys surreptitiously crooking their thumbs, in the manner the Igobians charm against the Evil Eye.

The girl had evidently gained a reputation for witchcraft and it was not hard for the boy to deduce the quick work of the revengeful wizard. Harris had seen the village dehumanized under the cry of witchcraft and mobbing its victim to cruel death. His guardianship lost its romanticism for nerve-straining vigilance.

He wanted right there to call off the proposed visit to the Ju-ju grove, but the girl said, "You promised," and he had to carry through the program or go into explanations that would alarm her or, worse, bring those large black eyes on him in question of his courage.

They started out after the afternoon cup of tea to which the youth was wedded. The girl ducked away to her room as they set out and re-emerged in a few moments with camera and tripod, and dressed in a long, loose traveling-cloak, which was so unfitted for the kind of walking before them that Harris protested. But she smiled mysteriously and said she had a reason. She gave him the tripod to carry and they swung off through the village in a Highland fling progress over calabashes, piccaninnies, inquisitive buzzards, goats and chickens, the girl chattering excitedly of the advantage of a real fetish-grove "background" to her dance, until she suddenly noticed a change in the negroes who had been so friendly in the morning, but who now flung their arms across their faces or dived for their huts.

"What's the matter with them? Are they crazy?" she asked.

Harris caught her arm and hurried her, muttering something about its being their way, but knowing all the time that she was reputed to possess the dreaded Evil Eye. He hurried her, expecting every moment to hear the savages after them in demonaic passion.

They passed beyond the huts and into the fringe of the forest, where the land began to dip and a stagnant smell of seepage and decaying vegetation nauseated them. Every step thickened the forest, until mahoganies began to loom gigantically and close out the sky and light. The girl edged closer to her escort and sought his hand, oppressed by the eery silence and the gloom.

SUDDENLY, the jungle was pierced by a shaft of vivid and golden sunlight, where top branches had been lopped out of the canopy of nature's cathedral, whose giant columns were now seen to be festooned in thigh-bones and skulls. The girl's clutch on his hand tightened, but her enthusiasm for the scenic possibilities to her stage setting triumphed over her fears.

"My!" her voice rolled around the mahoganies, frightening shrieking parrots and chattering monkeys into hiding silence. "Lily Lovelace's 'Death Dance of the Juggernauts' is already a back number! What's that shiny thing over there? Goodness! it is the altar! It's made of skulls! How horrid! I couldn't have imagined anything half so fine for my stage setting. Let's take a picture; there's light enough."

She set the tripod and camera and got the altar in focus, then placed the shutter-bulb in his hand, telling him to turn his head and not look until she called. He obeyed wonderingly, until her call rang around the forest. He turned and gasped to see her squatted on the altar, her face in shuttered

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repose, the fine head hung forward—the attitude of a devotee wrapped in transcendentalism. If he had disliked the poster, he hated this vehemently. He could scarcely control himself to press the bulb and call out "All right!" He waited with head turned to the forest.

Suddenly he started at a movement among the trees—the gliding of dark manshapes. The discovery of this spying gave him chills down the spine and the moment he heard the girl's breath at his side he caught up the camera and gripped her arm, dragging her forward.

"Come," he urged, "let's hurry."

"Why?" she asked. Not awaiting his answer, she chattered on, "Did you see me? Didn't I look fine? I do hope the picture will come out right. Oh, if only I could have real bones to my stage altar! Now all I want is to see the Moon Dance and I shall be fixed fine. But what's the matter? Don't hurry me so!"

But he plunged on, glancing fearfully aside at the silent, sinister shapes moving in the darker shadows of the trees in parallel lines. He knew they were waiting their opportunity to rush the girl from such a position that she could not give them the Evil Eye. He hoped to skirt the village and get her into the compound by the rear gates, but she suddenly spoiled his chance by darting from his side at the sound of tom-toming off to her right.

She cried out excitedly, "The dance! The Ju-ju dance!"

She did not hear his call or warning, but slipped away like a hare, leaving the youth in the rear.

A yellow, murky light showed among the trees and soon they came on a score of sun-coppered hoydens dancing to low, monotone tom-toming and shrill reed-piping. In the circle formed by the gyrating girls hopped and bent and humped the fantastic wizard, while a group of Igobians kept up a hand-clapping chorus.

The girl stopped in the surprise and wonder of it, and as Harris came up he felt her body pulsating in contagious rhythm to the undulations of the neurotic devotees of the Ju-ju dance. Her interest was still an unshocked business interest. She breathed her criticism in his ear.

"It's a winner—a winner! A real cult! A little more foot-movement; but everything else goes. The tom-toms and bean gourds; those smoky torches that give such fantastic shapes to the blacks; that funny old chap with the squeaky pipe, and those lickety-lick ivory anklets and bracelets. It's easy, too. Watch!"

Her hands flew to the collar button of her cloak; but Harris jumped at her, urging hoarsely,

"Not now! Let's get away. Come, you must; we are followed and spied on. They are closing in around us!"

The warning was too late. The blacks came in on all sides, holding their arms across their faces, but still advancing. The youth bawled at them, but they paid no attention to him. One threw a cloth over the girl's head. Harris struck at him, and the next moment he was blinded and choked by red pepper, flung in his face.

When he got the stinging hot pain out of his eyes, nose and throat he was alone in the forest.

Africa had taught him to think in leaps and act swiftly. His knowledge of Igobian superstitions told him that no negro would dare spill the blood of a person suspected of witchcraft or the evil spirit would enter his own body. He knew there was a set procedure in such cases. The victim would be blindfolded and marched to the Ju-ju Rock and there cast to death from the precipice. The rock was five hours' march, if the negroes kept up a steady pace, but he banked much on Ethiopian laziness and idle inconstancy. Anyway, the girl was safe for five hours and——

He suddenly remembered his rifle and its muffler. He had a swift intuition of the part the muffler might play in the rescue and, as he ran to the compound, he breathed a prayer for its God-sent timeliness. He snatched the rifle from its corner in the chop-room, filled his pocket with cartridges from the sideboard, where he always kept them handy for a marauding leopard, then took the trail at a Chinaman's run-walk.

THE trail skirted the edge of the baobabs until it came out on the high-grassed plain that led away to the Western Sudan, where it trailed away under a three-quarter moon like an immense serpent. He ran with the training of schoolday paper-chasing—head high, breathing evenly, nursing his strength. He was surprised at his unexcited certainty of rescue and his seeming lack of feeling for the

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girl's predicament. It came to him with curious revelation that if it had been the demure English missy in the clutches of the savages he would be suffering the tortures of the damned. But this hoyden's independence and insensibilities seemed to guard her.

He knew that her captors would superstitiously refrain from injuring her until she was thrown from the rock. He also knew the chances were with him, that he would soon overtake the party and get in his rifle-play and muffler mystery. First, he argued to himself, the trail allows only single-file progress, so that the slowest man sets the pace; secondly, the whole party would squat promptly at the first sign of fatigue, or to pulp a cactus for its stored water, or to pick a thorn from a toe, or to consult the oracles when a shooting-star flashed across the sky. But above all, he smiled in his heart to think of the effect of the death-dealing bullet that would take its victim silently, swiftly, out of nowhere.

He was not surprised when, in less than two hours, he saw a score of woolly black heads bobbing leisurely on the level of the grass like yacht moorings in a green sea. Then he saw the chicken-tail feathers of the wizard's head-dress in the lead. He tip-toed and strained to see the girl, but the grass hid the view. He had to get on an elevation from which he could pour in his fire. He looked down the flat plain, and saw, right in the line of the trail, a huge wide-spreading alleluba tree, blocked against the moonlight like a ship sailing under full canvas. His African experience told him that the trail led to its shade, and that if the negroes camped at all it would be under the tree.

He had to detour into the grass to get ahead of his quarry. It was terrible work pushing his way through the stout reeds, with all his senses fearfully alert to the rustling away of pythons and hyenas. It came to him that he was one lone white in all the immensity of that star-domed plain pitting himself against its savage inhabitants and yet conqueror because of the rifle he carried.

A feeling akin to exultation buoyed him along, and a flush of the inherited old primitive man for the fight tingled the veins of this youth so recently taken out of tamed England. Then he reached the tree, where it was the work of a moment for his athletic body to catch a hanging bow, pull himself up and climb into a fork, whence he commanded the trail. He waited with sighted rifle, viciously, determinedly, confidently.

He heard a low chanting and a beating of a gourd, each beat giving a step to the march. Then he saw the wizard. His mind flashed away to a story of the Indian Mutiny, wherein a lone Sepoy in a tower had picked off man after man of the attacking company—each white puff of smoke heralding a death. But there would be no tell-tale smoke here!

For a moment the foliage of the alleluba obscured the wizard from view, but showed the girl walking a few steps behind him. Her head was still muffled in the cloth, but she walked erect and firmly. Then he saw that her wrists were bound with grass rope. The sight enraged him; he drew a bead on the trail where the wizard must reappear, and the instant he sighted the tail-feathers he shot at a splotch of red ocher painted over the man's heart.

The hammer clicked in his ear and there was a slight kick to his shoulder. He saw the wizard leap into the air, double up like a collapsing monkey-on-a-stick and fall dead in his tracks. He could almost have laughed. He quickly drew a bead on the negro nearest the girl, but never pulled the trigger. For one paralyzing moment the party stood transfixed, staring at the girl, then shrieking, "Ju-ju! Ju-ju!" they fled back to Igobo.

Harris called out to the girl:

"It is me! It's all right. I am coming!"

Slipping down the tree-trunk, he hurried to her and tore the cloth from her head, then cut the rope round her wrists, crying, "They have not hurt you, thank God! Don't stare so; it is I, Harris. Amy, don't look like that!"

She recovered her wits with a spasmodic awakening and threw her arms about his neck and kissed him, then sank to the ground, complaining in a perfectly natural tone,

"I'm tired and thirsty. What were they going to do? That cloth nearly choked me!"

SHE filled the still night with her chatter as they retraced the trail back to the trading-station. Already she was her sane, calm self.

"I knew you would come," she said. "I

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don't think I was really afraid; anyway, they were only bluffing, weren't they?"

He nodded. Even though it belittled his heroic rescue, he was glad she was spared the knowledge of her narrow escape. He listened to her chatter with a subtle sense of disappointment. Mentally he put the English girl in her place and imagined the clutch on his arm and his soothing of her sobs, and perhaps the supporting arm he would put round her waist. This girl was too unmoved. Already she was reclaimed by her ambitions.

"This will make just the sort of press story I wanted," she enthused. "*You* must write it up; I can't, because I'm the heroine." She blissfully ignored his claims to heroism and chattered on. "What do you call that thing on the end of your gun? A what? A muffler? Well, it muffled all right. Goodness! I was surprised. Oh——" she stopped short with sudden recollection, looking back along the trail—"We must send some one to get that head-dress and those charm things. I want my stage to be just as real as I can make it.

His dissatisfaction with her increased with her every sentence. He liked her as a comrade—liked her for her free and generous ways and liked the boyishness that his coat, which he had thrown over her, she having lost her cloak in the first struggle, lent to her figure, but as his ideal woman, she lost ground every step and the further she slipped away, the closer crept the face of the picture in his bedroom.

Then, when they reached the compound, his soulship was blown back into its haven of demure and sensitive womanhood by the arrival of a mail canoe. He raised an exile's cry of "Letters!" Catching up the mail-bag, he emptied it on the chop-room table. From the litter he snatched a small envelope, ripped it open with his thumb and steeped his soul in its contents. Presently he raised swimming eyes to the girl.

"It's from Sis—all about home things. My old dog Stub chewed up my last letters and no one could read them. Sis whipped him and May cried."

The girl caught a soft intonation in the "May cried" that made her ask, "Who's May?" He stammered and the tell-tale color mantled his face.

"May is—why, May is—a girl I know. I like her! I have her photo in my room!"

"Well, why did she cry? If a dog chewed up my letters I'd whip it good and plenty!" she said viciously.

"She cried because she loved old Stub and he didn't know he was doing wrong. She's like that, y' know—likes pets and flowers and babies."

He spoke a little diffidently and when the girl smiled tolerantly out of her large eyes and said, "Oh!" the youth flew back into fierce loyalty to his old ideals. He flung his hat to the ceiling, caught it again and dashed away to his sleeping-room to feed his soul on the face in the photo.

THE stern-wheeler, her main deck lumbered up with "background" for the "Mystic Moon Dance of the Devil Worshipers," was about to cast off. If the girl had had her way there would have been a score of real barbarians to accompany the litter, but she listened to the youth's earnest persuasions to indenture a score of cake-walking darkies from Virginia.

The girl was very generous in her appreciation of all her young host had done for her.

"You've been awf'ly good and haven't tried to be spoony or troublesome and you've got me just everything I wanted."

She held out both hands and kissed him sisterly and hoped that he would some day see her dance. She promised to send him her Sunday Page and press criticisms. Then the engine-room gong clanged and Harris sprang ashore, where he waved his handkerchief until the boat disappeared round the palmed bend, when he returned soberly up the compound and slipped back easily into the uneventful routine and dreams.

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HER EXCELLENZA

by Izola Forrester *

CHAPTER I

THE SHIP SAILS

AS THE taxi slipped through the double line of trucks, street-cars, and cabs that thronged West Street, long, deep-toned whistles sounded from the *Prinzessin Luise.*

Inside the motor-cab a girl sat motionless, looking dreamily ahead of her, and seeing nothing save her own fancies. Her face was colorless under her fur hat, a mere touch of ivory whiteness in the shadowy dimness, with dark, keen eyes that watched the world idly.

The chauffeur swerved the cab dexterously toward the cool, dark entrance to the pier and made for the gang-plank.

Colored porters and runners raced to meet it and ran alongside. From the office an official shouted it was too late to board the liner. Out of the gray blur ahead other voices yelled. The air seemed filled with whistles and human cries and clanging bells.

"It is good we sent Andre and Tatiana ahead, Tanta," the girl said. "They will make the liner wait for us. Give the man his fare quickly and we will hurry."

The other woman in the taxi nodded her head in silence. She, too, was quiet. She did not appear to notice the clamor outside, but stared straight ahead of her, a grave, motherly woman, with the patient, toil-wearied face of a Millet peasant.

They were met on deck by a man of foreign appearance, who, apparently, arranged matters for them.

Directly above the gang-plank, on the promenade deck, two men watched the late arrivals for whose convenience the boat waited.

"He called one 'Excellenza,'" said one of them, Nicholas Serrano, an American in spite of his foreign name.

The younger man smoked his cigarette gravely, appreciatively, with the unmistakable Continental air which makes smoking a ceremonial function.

"Any woman is called 'Excellenza,' Nick, after you pass the western limits of Germany, if she wears sables and travels with an *entourage,*" he answered. "This one wears her clothes like a Frenchwoman, looks like a Russian, and yet she may come from Kansas City!"

* See page 380.

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"She is too detached from the crowd, too self-possessed, too impersonal. Oh, Max, see there!"

Out of the dark entrance to the pier-shed appeared one more late passenger, this time a man. Out he sprang, a slim streak of black, and leaped the widening space between the pier and the deck.

"What a leap, Nick!" exclaimed the man who smoked. He threw the cigarette into the river impetuously and laid his hand on his friend's shoulder. "Come. I would see the lad. He is only a boy. He leaps like a tiger. I will see him."

"You had better keep to yourself, Max, or Taub will cry 'broken orders' against you."

"*N'importe*," laughed the younger man with a shrug. "I forget the game, eh, Nick? Forgive."

The great ship slipped from her moorings as lightly as any sloop and took the outgoing current that raced to the open harbor and out to sea.

"SHALL I reach the other shore alive, I wonder?" said Max. He pushed back his gray cap and looked down at the running waves.

"Don't brood," warned Nick; "it eats up nerve force. Where's Taub?"

"In the stateroom. He wished to keep out of sight. He is better known than myself. Did you look at the list of passengers?"

"Yes. There are none to avoid, unless they have chosen to travel incog. It is an off-day, and a poor boat for social enjoyment. We have the last suite to your left, beyond the drawing-room. It is very quiet. Only one other suite on that passage."

"Who has that?" asked Max.

"Women. A Madame Pavlova, niece, and maid."

"They travel alone? That is not like Continental women!"

"There's a sort of a courier chap besides, the purser tells me. He stood beside the companionway as we came aboard. Looked like a Swiss waiter. Small, dark, very tidy, with a thin, upturned mustache showing the lips. He was taking an optical inventory of everybody."

"So were you!"

"With good reason," answered Nick. "Here come our neighbors now. It is 'Her Excellenza!'"

CHAPTER II

THE GRAND DUCHESS MILITZA OF VILMA

THEY had entered the cabin, and were going forward into the main saloon. Just at the point amidships where the grand circular companion swept upward from the main deck, they encountered the party which had so nearly missed the boat.

The younger woman walked quickly toward them, her long fur cloak falling loosely from throat to feet in rich folds of gray moleskin. Against its somber darkness her slim, girlish neck showed delicately fair. About it hung a strand of oddly-cut, deeply-set oblong gems. They looked like pink topaz set in dull, antique silver. Even in the half-light the men could see her face and realize its strange, appealing beauty. The upcurling masses of dusky hair were parted and waved back in careless, boyish fashion, in defiance of prevailing style.

They saw, for one instant, the dark, level eyebrows and heavy-lidded eyes, the latter with a look of haunting sorrow, a sorrow that stood apart from the world in almost imperious isolation, and lastly, the full, close lips, whose wilful droop belied the deeply cleft dimple in her pointed chin.

It was decidedly a foreign face, yet one that bore no stamp of any special race. Most impressive of all, perhaps, was the intangible air of distinction that clung to her.

The elder woman followed her. After them came the courier and several porters.

Not a word was exchanged, but in that second of time, as the two faced each other, the glances of the girl and Nicholas Serrano met. Her head was upraised, nearly on a level with his own. There was neither curiosity nor interest in her gaze, and yet, as it encountered his, something beneath her lashes sparkled with life.

"Your suite is 'B,' Excellenza," said the courier, pressing forward. "It is this way, very select, very private."

She replied in a foreign language, tersely, with swift rebuke in her tone. It sounded oddly familiar to the man called Max, like some Russian patois of the south. He turned and looked after her as though he sought to recall some lost memory.

"Taub will be hunting us soon if we don't show up," Nicholas reminded him. "I promised him I would let him know."

"Know what?"

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"That the list is clear."

"It is not clear, Serrano. I remember her now."

"You are becoming as great a romancer as old Taub, Max." Nicholas Serrano glanced at the tall, slender chap beside him with amused, kindly regard.

"Ah, you laugh; you do not credit me! But wait till I recall her name, and tell it to Taub. Do you know who that woman was that just passed us, the one they call 'Excellenza'?"

"Haven't the slightest notion."

Max frowned.

"I thought I recognized her as she came aboard, but was not positive. What name do you say she travels under?"

"Madame Pavlova and niece, maid and courier, are on the list."

"Madame Pavlova is a servant, a companion, a chaperone, a blind. What is the other's name?"

"I do not know. Why are you interested?"

"You heard what the courier called her?"

"It is a Russian title, is it not?"

"Russian, yes, and Austrian, too, and Hungarian. You will hear it in all the countries east of Germany, as I say. But this is Russian. I have not seen her in seven years, but I remember the face. Her father was a Russian noble, her mother a Morvarian court beauty. She is the Grand Duchess Militza of Vilma——"

"Monsieur, I bear a message for you."

The cool, respectful tones of the courier sounded abruptly at their very elbows. He was bowing very low. Serrano had a most sudden and urgent desire to kick him for his espionage, but the look on his friend's face checked him.

"Her Excellenza bids me present her compliments. She is *en route* to Trieste. She recognizes monsieur. She graciously recalls meeting him at the royal hunt some years ago in Morvaria. She requests that monsieur and his companion attend her after dinner in the drawing-room of the upper saloon."

Max smiled, and glanced up at his friend's countenance.

"What says the Dictator? Shall we attend her Excellenza?"

Beneath the lightness of the tone there was an undercurrent of gravity. Even the courier noted it, but did not look at them. Nicholas Serrano laughed.

"I am at the service of all who need me. But we do not speak Russian. We are Americans."

This time it was the corners of the courier's mouth that lifted, the very slightest tremor of a smile.

"French is spoken at Vilma. Her Excellenza prefers it. I shall then tell her that monsieur will attend her after dinner."

"WHY the deuce did you say you would attend her?" demanded Serrano, when the man had gone. "What will Taub say?"

Max laughed, his long, narrow eyelids half closing over eyes of deepest blue. He brushed his fingers through his short fair hair roughly.

"We will go and find out. I never liked uncertainty. Taub has already traveled half around the world on a fervent quest. He has succeeded in that quest. He has found me, and is compelling me to give up a happy, quiet existence for one of trouble and turmoil. Therefore, he is my debtor. I happen to be aware that the only person in the world whom Taub fears is the Grand Duchess Militza of Vilma."

"Why? She is just one more beautiful woman, after all."

"Just one more? You have never been seriously in love, my Dictator, have you? No? So I concluded. I have. Many and many times. And once with the Grand Duchess Militza. She speaks the truth. Eight years ago, when I was a lad of eighteen, there was a meet of the royal hunt at the Great Forest above Lenar. It was given in honor of the heir to the throne."

"What else?" as the other paused.

"She was about fifteen then, a slip of a girl on horseback. She wore that day, I remember, a cap of fur, similar to the one she had on to-day, and fur about her throat and wrists. And her eyes and hair and lips, they were the same. I marked her then for memory's future reference."

"Why does she travel incog., and why should she be here in the States?"

"Probably because like other women of the blood royal she despises your national trait—the sign of the very young—curiosity."

"But why should Taub fear her? As the future——"

"Be quiet. You speak too plainly. Possibly because he knows she is the one person,

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next to ourselves, who has no fear of him. Taub is a royalist to the core, but a rare old royalist. He is out of date in his ethics, utterly behind the times in his dream of kingly power. The storms of modern thought pass over him like cloud shadows on the earth. His idea of a revolution is simply a lot of unruly children who must be subdued and heavily punished. Of the trend of human progress he has no comprehension. Of the new goal which mankind has set before it, the goal of the 'beyond-man,' as our friend Nietsche has it, he never thinks. He treads his daily round of official duty and never hears the rumbling of the underworld that some day will burst its bounds."

"What has this to do with Militza?"

"Eh, you are too concrete, my Dictator," said Max. "You will always immediately take the idea, and etherize it, and place it before you on a pin, so. And you lose the perspective thereby, the panorama, the *ensemble*. It is unwise to speak the words aloud, but this much I will tell you. She is the daughter of the Grand Duke Paul——"

"Leo Pavlovavitch?" In spite of himself Serrano looked startled.

"Be careful how you speak. Yes. You know the story? Taub was military governor at the time at Crombers on the frontier. He captured the man known as Leo Pavlovavitch, and ordered his execution. You know why. After his death, it was found that the man was no other than the Grand Duke Paul of Vilma. It was smothered up before the world caught at the truth. But Militza never forgets. She loved her father. There were no other children, except a brother. Some day she intends to pay back her father's debt, and Taub knows it!"

"I don't like the affair," said Serrano, frowning. "It smacks too much of your Balkan imbroglios. I never trust a woman with eyes that lift at the outer corners, Oriental-wise. They are—well, more than woman in subtle penetration as well as charm. And when you find it in a Russian it is the most dangerous combination in the world. We can not afford to get entangled with any sort of a moleskin-clad mystery with eyes and lips that allure and question—not at this stage of the game. We are seven days out from Trieste. Nine days to reach the capital. It is a long time to delay a royal funeral. You have had a pleasant time the past seven years, chasing your *wanderlust* over the globe. And it happens that you were glad to see both Taub and myself when we found you Monday."

"I was thankful," said the other devoutly, "to see you both enjoying such excellent health."

Serrano laughed, and laid one hand on the other's shoulders.

"You're a queer lad, Max, but you're white, and I like you. I want to see you through this stretch of hell-fire without any scorching. Don't follow this glow-worm's glimmer. Don't let your hankering for amusement on this last voyage lead you into a mess that will kill everything and ruin Taub. Are you in love?"

"I am interested. She is very attractive. But it is not for that I follow the glimmer, my Dictator. I would find out now—before we land at Trieste, before we proceed to Lenar—I would find out why the most adorable and exclusive Militza chooses to travel incog. from America to Austria, just at the interesting moment when Morvaria plays at see-saw and my own life is worth just—that!" He flipped a cigarette-butt aside.

"You think her trip has anything to do with the situation at Lenar?"

Max smiled.

"Let us ask Taub."

CHAPTER III

AN EXCHANGE OF RÔLES

THE man whom they called Taub stood at the porthole as they entered their suite. He was short in stature, a stout, distinguished-appearing man, with iron-gray hair brushed back from a high forehead, and a smoothly shaven face, curiously fresh-colored and youthful compared with the rest of his appearance. He looked like a man who had appreciated the gift of life and had cultivated it. The double-lensed eyeglasses which he wore gave his eyes an oddly magnified expression.

"We pass the forts," he remarked casually, as they closed the outer door and snapped the catch on it. "So far, I feel relieved."

"And only thus far, Baron? We have news already for you," said Max. "Militza of Vilma is our companion *en voyage*."

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He seated himself on the edge of the berth and leisurely opened his case for a fresh cigarette.

Taub turned quickly and stared down at the fair, Teutonic countenance. The color deepened in his face until even his neck was tinted dull red. He turned and carefully closed the porthole before he spoke.

"She does not know that we are crossing also?"

"We do not know what she knows, my Taub. She is a woman. I have heard it told, when I was a lad, that a woman will tell a truth in different guise to her confessor, her husband, her parents, even to herself, until she believes her own version of it. We can not tell what Militza thinks of us any more than we can judge what the sea thinks of the liner passing above it. Have a cigarette?"

"Pouf! Do not trifle, sir!" Taub paced up and down the narrow space moodily. "She will keep to her suite, undoubtedly. So will we. We need not meet."

"We shall meet, my Taub. Ah, but yes. We shall meet this very evening," laughed Max. "We have just been honored by an invitation to meet her Excellenza, after dinner."

Taub set his lips so closely that they made a pale ellipse of color about his mouth. But he did not speak the thoughts which surged into his mind. He did not reach out and cuff this rebellious youngster, as his fingers itched to do. He looked, and reserved judgment. Serrano threw himself on the couch and lay there with eyes closed. He was not a smoker. He said it gave him the false impression of being very busy when he was idle. Neither was he much of a talker. He preferred listening to what the other man was saying. It exposed his weak points for future attack. And, truth to tell, his mind was not dwelling closely on what Taub was saying. He was thinking of that meeting at the head of the companion, trying to recall exactly the expression in the eyes of the girl as they had met his own.

Taub's finger-tips tapped the back of the chair softly. He stared fixedly at the figure on the berth.

"Why is it she is here, on this boat, at this moment?"

"We have come to ask you the same question," said Max. "As an international diplomat of the keenest intelligence, we thought you would know."

Taub waved aside the raillery impatiently.

"You dally with danger, sir! She has an object. Whenever she moves, whenever she speaks, she has an object in view. She is a spy from court."

"From which court?" asked Nick lazily. "I'm not next to all these undercurrents of intrigue and wheels within wheels that are daily bread to you, Baron. I was living as a peaceable ex-attaché in Vienna, when you ferret me out, and compel me to start on a chase after Morvaria's missing——"

"Hush, I beg of you, be more discreet!" warned Taub.

"Missing hope, then."

"You were the one man who was in correspondence with him."

"A king incog. is an elusive individual," smiled Max.

"You're not a king yet," came back from the couch. "It lies on the knees of the gods, and they are already shaking under their burden."

Taub lifted a protesting palm.

"You boys babble like women! What do we know of what is and is not? When I left Lenar it was said that Otto might live through the night, or for a week, or possibly a year. Cerebral paralysis was feared at any moment. The last time I looked on his face he seemed a corpse already. I believe that you are already the king, sir."

FOR a moment a shadow rested on the handsome, cheerful face of Max. He regarded the tip of his cigarette and its vanishing light with almost affectionate concern.

"Poor old Uncle Otto," he said slowly. "He would not slip into eternity so placidly if he knew that I was on my way back to take his place. He hated my very shadow."

"He had good cause," returned Taub stolidly. "You are the sole child of the woman he loved. She married his brother instead of appreciating royal favor. It was ill advised. Otto refused to place a queen on the throne beside him. I believe he always hoped that fate would play one of her charlatan tricks and give him the one he wanted. Men do such things, some of them. He had reigned for twenty-eight years. The last seven he has been practically a prisoner at Stradel Castle, above Lenar, the very sport of fortune, a mad king, with his people clamoring for abdication, for a republic, or else for your return. It

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was a hard alternative. He had lived to see his brother buried, to see your mother a widow at thirty, even to witness her passing out of life, but you have lived to menace his entire scheme of existence. No wonder he went mad!"

Max shrugged his broad shoulders.

"It is not his fault that I am not dead. My mother told of nurses bribed to poison me, to drop me so that I should be a cripple, to lose me, to smother me—oh, accidentally, Nick, of course. Do not look grim. It is our custom." He sat up with sudden energy. "I am sick of the whole opera comique. I have been a prince, and, believe me, it is neither a pleasant nor a desirable profession. I have been infinitely freer, happier, more contented, during my five years of wandering than I was at Morvaria. The very kindest thing my uncle ever did for me was to exile me. Think, when you found me, two days ago, where was I?"

"At a desk, second one to your left," murmured Serrano. "Monsieur Venhalt, representative of Truax & Reid, Importers. Never will I forget the expression on old Taub's face when he beheld your Most Gracious Majesty seated at that desk, dictating letters to a very pretty girl, on the market price of—what was it?"

"Hides," returned Max contentedly. "Hides, we dealt in. Chamois, calf, and otherwise. Most lucrative trade. I had begun to wish that I owned goats myself. Wasn't there a poverty-stricken devil of a king who turned goatherd?"

"If you talk so in Lenar, they will say you take after Mad Otto," said Taub gravely. "I had no idea that you were actually laboring in New York. I understood that you were traveling in search of adventure and recreation."

"On what?" demanded Max. "One can not travel in America on one's royal presence, Baron. One must have cash. Another eccentricity of mine wherein I differ from the royal family—I have a penchant for paying my bills. To proceed, I was happy and contented at my desk, considering the market price of chamois hides, when you two disturbed me. You flashed the mirror of fate into my face, and therein I beheld the transformation. I was the king! I had to be the king. Destiny had reached out a motherly hand and gripped me bodily. Already the crown pinched my temples, and my uncle's signet ring was on my hand. Who first thought out this chase after me at the final moment? Why under the light of heaven was I chosen as the antidote for Morvaria's discontent?"

"I planned it," answered Taub placidly. "I was your mother's counsellor for years. After the death of Prince Demitri, your father, I became your governor and friend. I knew that you alone could save Morvaria from the horrors of revolution; from worse, from the mangling by a pack of madmen who would tear at her vitals as wolves devour a lamb. Listen."

He lowered his tone, and drew forward the small table. On its polished surface he traced his imaginary map.

"HERE lies Morvaria, south of Hungary. She is a winsome land, this Morvaria of ours, a land of peasants and herders, and peaceful folk, save when their primitive passions are stirred. So small she is, so peaceful and inoffensive, that she has not even been deemed worthy of controversy. Under the wing of Austria-Hungary she has nestled ever since she rose against Servia. Prussia would have drawn her into the new empire, but she was already reaching out her finger-tips to Vienna. And nobody protested at her choice. It was looked upon as the whim of a girl. Russia, even, has passed her by as a little pastoral principality. And why?"

"She did not offend," Max replied lightly.

"Ah, but now she offends! Our quiet, happy little homeland has been chosen as a place of refuge by a class thrown out of other countries. Lenar is no longer the peaceful capital of your boyhood, my lad. It is the switchboard from which wires extend all over the world, and the very devil himself has his finger on the key. Is an empress shot down in cold blood? Be assured her assassins hail from Lenar. Is a governor slain secretly in Poland, in Odessa, in Siberia? The hand that did the deed accepted its commission in Lenar. Is an innocent child blown to atoms because a golden circlet binds its brow? Look for the murderer at Lenar."

"Taub, you rave. Speak with judgment." The voice of Max was stern with warning, but the old man lifted up both arms in denunciation and went on:

"It is God's truth, sir! Oh, my King—for you will be—you are now, for aught we

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know—my King, and you, Serrano, most faithful comrade to us both, can you know what it is for us who love her, to think of our motherland, our Morvaria, as the free-love of anarchy, of red-handed murder and most hellish conspiracy? That is why I crossed the sea to find you, Maximilian of Morvaria. You are young, and fearless, and beloved of the people. They loved your mother, the gentle Princess Maria Beatrice. They trusted and adored your father, Demitri, as much as they hated Otto. And they wait for you yonder, my Prince, they look to you as men look upward to the sky they pray toward, as men look forward to the coming of Spring after the long, dark Winter. It is time you threw back of you the follies of personal desires. They handicap you for the race. You must fulfil your destiny. You belong to yourself no longer. You are Morvaria's!"

The face of the Prince was strangely thoughtful. He let his cigarette burn itself out before he answered, in low, kindly tones:

"Good old Taub, you always knew how to work me up, didn't you, to just the proper pitch? Nick, back when I was a bit of a youngster, crazy to live like other boys, crazy to be free, Taub used to talk like this by the hour at me, train me, discipline me, lecture me, plead with me, until I would willingly have handed him my heart to feed to these people who, he assured me, adored me. Clever old Taub, you rare old general, again I offer you my heart, my hands, my soul and strength, and hopes and joys, and life itself, if need be, to offer to your goddess Morvaria, this girl land of yours who has strayed after false gods. Does it please you?"

Taub bent forward, his voice hoarse with intense feeling.

"Until death, I serve my king! Is it not graven above the portals of Markowitz Castle? A Baron Taub placed it there when he left to join Leopold in the Crusades. To-day I echo it."

THE afternoon light was fading at the porthole, when a tap sounded at the door. Serrano opened it, and faced the bowing courier.

"Her Excellenza awaits you," he said.

Max rose without meeting Taub's steady, appealing glance.

"We will be there directly. Where is her Excellenza?"

"In the upper drawing-room. I will conduct messieurs."

"One moment, then." Taub stepped forward and deliberately shut the door, excluding the courier. "If you persist in this madness, I ask one precaution. I know this woman. She is young and impetuous and trusts to intuition. At this crisis we take no chance with such, sir! Will you listen?"

"She is waiting," Max answered.

"Tell him presently. You must change your garments, anyway. Tell him to await you. It will gain time."

While the Prince hesitated, half amused, half annoyed, Serrano opened the door, and gave the courier instructions. Then followed one of the strangest conferences ever known on a prosaic modern liner. In whispers Taub gave implicit directions. The two men listened to him interestedly, then gravely, with deepening feelings. Finally they gripped hands, these three varied comrades whom fate had thrown together and united by ties of mutual interest. The Baron's face was haggard after the strain of his argument; Serrano, despite his attitude of disinterested friendliness toward the other two, looked troubled; Max of Morvaria, standing in the very shadow of a throne, yet with the lure of a new love attracting him like a veritable firefly of fate, smiled philosophically.

"This much you promise, for the sake of Morvaria, this much at least." Taub looked first at one young face, then at the other. "It can make no difference, and yet it may mean everything. She is not certain. Neither is the courier. She has only seen you once, Max. Play the fool if you will, but do not let her believe that she has Otto's heir at her feet. They are very busy feet, my Prince. They have danced on the hearts of men."

"She will know within ten days that we have deceived her," responded Max moodily.

"Let her. By then you will be on the throne at Lenar. At present you are rocking between sky and sea. You agree, Serrano?"

"I am entirely at your service, Baron. I told you so when you routed me out of a comfortable bachelor existence in Vienna."

"And you, sir?"

Max spread out his hands with a quick, deprecating gesture.

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"You have me at your mercy. I feel it is wrong to her and to us, but if diplomacy demands it at this stage of the game, I'll agree."

"Higher forces than diplomacy demand it," said the old man impressively. "It is the very life of the motherland that has the claim upon you. You both give me your word of honor. I do not ask for oaths. A man whose word is held lightly will not keep oaths. You give me, both, your word?"

And both men answered.

"We give it."

The courier tapped at the door.

CHAPTER IV

SERRANO SUCCEEDS IN HIS RUSE

THE small drawing-room off the long upper saloon was apparently empty as they entered. It was the dinner hour, a curious time to choose for so small a reception.

The electric lights were not yet turned on. It was sunset, and the warm, golden light shone mellowly in the saloon. Madame Pavlova occupied a corner settee, stolid, close-lipped, self-effacing, and knitting with swift, perfect stitch.

The girl stood at a table, both hands resting lightly on its edge, watching the approach of her guests. She looked more conventional, more approachable, in her dinner gown of close-fitting velvet, than she had in the long fur cloak and jeweled turban. The brown velvet seemed to echo the color of her eyes, dark and tender as a moth's wings or dusky lichen of the woods. Her hair was parted lightly on one side and waved back to the nape of her throat. Crowning it was a narrow, twisted circlet of dull gold whose topaz pendant glowed on her low, broad forehead in Oriental fashion.

The courier, Andre, paused. She met his glance inquiringly. It told her nothing, Again she looked at the two men bowing before her.

"Truly, seven years is a long while," she said gently in French, a little whimsical smile lifting the corners of her mouth. "I do not know which one I have sent for."

She glanced from one face to the other. One was a youthful, even boyish, contented, blond, the face of a student, of a believer in all he wished to believe in. His blue eyes met hers full of homage and admiration, and she looked at the other man instinctively.

There was neither homage nor admiration nor compromise in the steady gaze of the man whom Taub had said must be the Prince *pro tem.* It was courteous, interested, but again there came that fleeting wave of magnetic force flashed between the two. Was it antagonism, or attraction? She remembered their meeting at the head of the companion, and suddenly smiled. The first man was a pleasant-featured boy. This one was of her own world.

"Possibly I have made an error, but I think not." Her voice was low and clear as she chose her words. "To be frank, I do not recognize, perfectly, the person I sent for. I sought a countryman, but you are Americans, no?"

"You condemn us without a hearing, Excellenza," said Serrano, before the Prince could answer, as he bowed low over her extended hand. "I have been away from Europe long, but not so long as that, I trust. If all those I look forward to meeting give me such brief quarter, I am indeed condemned—and foredoomed."

She drew her lips together with a sign of relief. The saloon was empty, save for themselves, yet her tone was hardly above a whisper as she leaned toward him.

"Then I was right? You are—he who is expected?"

"At Lenar," he finished the sentence for her, and touched her finger-tips with his lips. "Excellenza, may I be permitted to present my friend and comrade, Lieutenant Nicholas Serrano, ex-attaché of the American embassy at Vienna?"

Again the slightly puzzled look came into her eyes as the Prince bowed over her hand. What was it? Something intangible about his presence that stirred sleeping memories. She murmured a few conventional words, putting the doubt from her, and turned to the woman in the corner.

"My aunt, Madame Pavlova, messieurs," she said slowly. "We travel together. She has been in my mother's place since I was a child."

"Shall you pass through Morvaria on the way to Vilma?" the Prince asked easily. "We hear there is danger of an uprising if Otto dies."

His blunt assault on the one topic to be avoided startled even the girl. Her long

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lashes shadowed her eyes. She sank back into a deep cushioned chair.

"One hears many rumors. We fear no danger. I am known and protected by the people from Archangel to the Crimea. I am a non-combatant."

"Because of your father's memory, Excellenza?"

"Because of my own personality." She looked up at him, half resenting his familiarity with topics tabooed, then, re-assured by his expression, she added, simply, "One does not fear where one loves. The people are dear to me."

"Lieutenant Serrano," interposed the elder woman. Her voice was at variance with her whole appearance. It was a wonderfully rich, deep voice, somewhat tired in its grave slowness. "Come and talk to me of the Excellenza's father. It rests my heart to meet some one who speaks his name."

ANDRE, the courier, smiled, his back to the others, as he left the saloon noiselessly. Pavlova was even more of a diplomat than usual, he thought. Sometimes it was held by those who studied these things that the older the doe, the greater the caution. For himself he liked the dangerous play of Militza's fire around the two men. He went out on deck where he could watch the door of Suite A, behind which sat Taub.

As the Prince seated himself beside Madame Pavlova, Militza leaned forward, her face full of tense eagerness, her eyes watching the man opposite.

"Now, we may talk freely," she said. "Tell me everything. I had no idea that the Baron had found you, until I recognized you this afternoon, as we were coming aboard."

"But, pardon, did you recognize me?" Serrano smiled back. "You did not remember me."

She brushed aside the protest with a swift gesture.

"I did know you. There, at the head of the companionway when you looked at me, did I not know you? I am so glad, so very glad for you, and for your people. It is like you to put the past behind you, and return to Lenar. Otto will surely die. And the people will call for you."

He noticed that she made no pretense whatever at court etiquette in her manner of speech. In fact, about her whole tone and address there was an air of camaraderie, of good fellowship, and mutual understanding that he found it hard to grasp the meaning of.

"The Baron is with you too, is he not?" she went on. "You need not answer if you think me inquistive. Andre saw him, and told me. It would have been wiser for you to cross on different boats. How foolhardy you men are! You are always ostriches, hiding your heads in sand."

"There is no danger."

"There is always danger about such as you. You are targets of fate and circumstances, you sovereigns of the earth. The crown's glitter tempts the sharpshooter miles away. Does any one else know that you are on the steamer?"

He shook his head slowly, watching her eyes.

"So far, only yourself. There are about twenty first-cabin passengers. The one familiar face I have seen was that of the boy who nearly missed the sailing."

"What boy? I did not see him." She had a quick, imperious way with her, a trick of alert sideglancing with her long-lashed eyes without turning her head. In the half-light, her lips looked like some red flower of the dusk. The real Prince, who talked so earnestly to Madame Pavlova, watched her too, from across the saloon, watched with speculative eyes, wondering just how far old Taub was right in his opinion of her.

"I am not positive, of course," said Nick, "but he resembled the son of Renalt, the big blacksmith at Lenar. You may remember Renalt. Above the village his shop stood, on the road to the castle. It backed up close to the mountain-side, and commanded the full sweep of the valley. Estvan was his only son. I could have sworn for the moment it was he who came near missing the boat."

"So excellent a memory over the blacksmith's son, and yet you did not remember me! Men are strange, are they not? They always seem crude to me, like unsensitized metal. They are the iron or steel that your blacksmith plays with. It never helps itself. It has to be heated, and welded and beaten into shape. Go on. Tell me more about this Estvan."

"He was mixed up in some trouble with the immigration authorities a year or so

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back. Stabbed a girl at Lenar, over a love-affair, and escaped. We caught him as he tried to board the steamer at Naples."

"You caught him?"

"The authorities took it up," he corrected himself, "I was with my friend at the time. The boy happened to have been born in America, and claimed protection at the consulate as a citizen."

"And he was cleared?"

"No. He escaped. Bearing a scar over the right eye, and a lasting enmity toward Serrano and myself. He is the only person in the world that I know of who might gladly kill me."

She looked steadily at him with a slow smile, a smile that parted her lips, and shadowed her eyes.

"I do not like the primitive passions of the proletariat," she said. "Red always blinds me. Talk of yourself, Max. You do not speak Russian?"

"I prefer French or English. You do not mind? It is safer here."

"I do not care what language you speak," she laughed. "It is good to hear you say anything at all. I should not mind if you roared, O mighty king of beasts! How serious you have grown. Why won't the Baron meet me?"

He was not prepared for utter frankness. There was a touch of almost boyish bravado, of unconcern and diablerie in her tone and glance as she asked the question abruptly.

"He did not say."

"You may speak the truth with me. It does not wound. It is only the great who can boast of true enemies. The Baron is my only enemy, I think. He and I stand apart from the rest of the world in this, my Prince. We two have a feud pending. Some day we will settle it, for neither of us ever forgets. We are good haters, Taub and I."

Nick was silent, looking at the face before him with its varying charm, its vivid magnetism. Privately he was perplexed. From what he had heard of the Grand Duchess, she was not one who cherishes a feud. She was known at the Peterhof, at Vienna, and in the gayest set in Paris and London, as a clever, beautiful girl who had inherited enormous wealth from her father. Yet over her, as over her father, there had always hung a peculiar glamour of mystery. He had heard her story from Max.

CHAPTER V

"WE ARE BUT CHILDREN OF FATE"

TRADITION said there had been lords in the old palace at Vilma before Peter the Great worked in the shipyards of Amsterdam. Perhaps that was why its princely line held itself aloof from the more modern courts. Since the mysterious death of the Grand Duke, Militza had been possessed with the very imp of *wanderlust*. She seemed to crave excitement, not the social excitement of other women's lives, but the mighty currents of life that surge throughout the so-called lower classes.

For some years after the death of her mother she had been lady-in-waiting at the minor Prussian court where her maternal grandfather still reigned, but its frugal ethics had left small trace upon her nature. As Serrano watched her now there drifted through his thoughts a memory of some vagrant bit of court gossip that he had heard at some time. Years before, it was said, a Grand Duchess of Vilma had been a Magyar Gypsy girl, wed by the civil law, and holy church, and also by tribal rites to the man she loved.

Sitting beside her descendant to-night, Nick fancied he could see the look of the Gypsy beauty in Militza's face, in the slightly Oriental slant to the outer corners of her long-lidded eyes, in the clear pale tint of her face, with its dusky pink underlying the skin. Perhaps, he thought, it was the latent call of the blood that called through generations and roused the *wanderlust* in her. Her father had never been content with the road that destiny and birth had mapped out for him. He had been a hunter, a traveler, a student in his youth, a shirker of court etiquette. Finally there was the last story of all, the pitiful tragedy of Leo Pavlovavitch, the student friend and leader of the destroyers, who had met his end at Crombers, facing the guns of Taub's soldiers.

All this, and more, swept through his mind in the silence that followed the girl's last words. Something of their intent was in his gaze, for she asked suddenly,

"Why do you look at me so, my Prince? Taub is your friend. I speak too freely perhaps. I forget that you are saturated with his teachings. And you regard me with suspicion because, as a woman, I dare to cherish a feud? Is that it? It is always

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a surprise to men when they find a woman who cherishes a point of honor." She lifted her long, slim arms above her head with a swift movement of impatience. "That is why I am tired of you all, you sleek, well-groomed, low-voiced men whom I have always met and known! Why? Because you lie to us, and smile at us and laugh at us and kiss us and pet us and buy us and beat us and very possibly kill us, as this boy of Renalt's tried to kill his sweetheart. And, behind the fretwork of the seraglio screen, my Prince, we do most cordially hate you all and plot against your safety!"

She leaned back her head and laughed softly at the gravity of his face, then asked suddenly,

"Taub does not like me, does he?"

"I had forgotten Taub."

"Then why do you gaze at me so doubtfully, so reflectively, as though you weighed me in the balance of your inner consciousness?"

"I had no such thoughts, Excellenza," said Nick slowly. "I was very sorry for you."

THE courtesy and deep feeling in his tone checked her quick speech. Meeting his glance, she knew that he was thinking of her father and his fate.

"Sorry for me?" she repeated, her face losing its gaiety instantly. "That is strange. I do not remember that any one was sorry for me before."

"Have I not been a wanderer, too, and under suspicion?"

"Ah, then you consider me under suspicion?" She lifted her dark, level brows with quick curiosity and leaned toward him.

"Necessarily, since you are your father's daughter."

"I do not see how his life or principles can affect me."

"You loved him. In spite of what you just remarked about the conspiracy behind fretwork screens, any woman who loves a man, whether father, brother, lover or husband, tinctures the current of her life with his personality. It is the same with us. The life of every man finds its wellspring of inspiration in the love of the one woman whose nature calls to his. It is nature, Excellenza. It is not free will. It is the inevitable cosmic law we humans obey, consciously or unconsciously, but we obey."

"How can one know?" Her voice sank to a whisper, but her eyes held his gaze.

"Know what?"

"This law you speak of."

"Remember your father. Did you not love him as I say?"

Her sensitive, full lips tightened, and she closed her eyes.

"Yes, I loved him—better than life I loved him."

"Then you know what I mean when I say that, necessarily, through this great current of love between you, you are affected by his principles and the manner of his passing. And Taub knows this."

She opened her eyes. Their lashes were wet with tears.

"Ah, so much of this is true, so much—if I could speak plainly to you—if I could reach out now, and——"

He smiled down at her, as he rose, the first time she had ever seen him smile.

"And what?"

"And save you——"

"Excellenza," the voice of Andre interrupted, at their back. "Dinner is served."

She caught her breath at the break. The Prince and Madame Pavlova were standing at the outer entrance, leading to the forward deck, waiting their coming. The man whom she believed to be the Prince bent over her outstretched hand and touched its cool, soft surface with his lips.

"From what would you save me?" he asked gently. "There is only one danger that threatens me—the necessity of filling Uncle Otto's boots. I go to my destiny most unwillingly."

"We have no right to rebel." Her tone was too low for Andre to catch, although his dark, narrow eyes watched them closely. "We are but children of fate, and obey sealed orders. I beg of your Highness to remember this, always, that even as you are not a free agent—neither am I!"

CHAPTER VI

MAX SURPRISES TAUB

THE second day out was a quiet one. Taub refused steadfastly to mingle with the other passengers and kept to the seclusion of his own stateroom. Smoking incessantly, he paced back and forth in its narrow space, or, seated at the oblong table, made entries in notebooks, over which he

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pondered for hours. After lunch Maximilian himself spent over an hour with him.

"The plan works?" asked Taub, scrutinizing the fair, youthful face opposite.

"You mean Militza? We met her, and were received charmingly."

"I mean does she suspect?"

"I have not made up my mind, Taub, to be frank. She seems to doubt her own judgment. She looks from Nick to me, and back again at Nick, but she looks longest at Nick. I begin to lose faith in myself, for assuredly she takes him for Prince Max."

"Do not laugh over so serious a matter," protested the old Baron sternly. "You tread a crater's edge and pirouette like a harlequin, sir. The fellow in the steerage is Estvan Nagy, the son of Renalt the blacksmith."

Max tipped back a chair and sat on it astride, leaning his elbows on the back. For the moment his face was grave.

"Even so?" he said at length. "We do not know that he is tracking us. It may possibly be coincidence. He stabbed a girl at a free-for-all dance. She was betrothed to him, and he thought her false. We in Lenar are primitive, my Baron. The blood runs red and warm under the flesh of our striplings. And the girl took that chance. I myself, under such conditions," he drew in a long whiff of smoke from his cigarette before he finished, "would have hunted up the girl and punished her. Also, the other man, who had trespassed. It is our way, we Morvarians. We believe in preserving the public tone. Why does Nick bear him an international grudge?"

"Not for the girl affair. You mistake." Taub drew his chair up to the table and bent his head nearer to the Prince. "This stripling, as you term him, was the Grand Duke Leo's attendant on many hunting trips. He was a light-hearted youngster, as I remember him, fiery of temper, and zealous, but to those whom he loved, faithful to death. You know the type of our mountain peasantry. There is not their like in all Europe. They are said to be the descendants of those Spartan lads who followed Leonidas to the Pass of Thermopylæ. Every now and then in the past, one of them has laid aside his shepherd's crook or woodsman's ax to lift the scepter. There is a tang of imperialism mixed to-day with their rugged simplicity. Every man feels that he is a possible king. Leo of Vilma liked our country. His mother was a Morvarian princess, and Lenar knew him often. He liked this lad of Renalt's and took him home with him."

"Before the stabbing affair?"

"A year before. Estvan did not return to Lenar. When I was at Crombers, on the frontier, and the other matter came up, letters were found in the lodgings of the man whom they called Leo Pavlovavitch, from this fellow, which helped to convict him and also established his identity with that of the Grand Duke Paul."

"Did you capture Estvan?"

"He was not in Crombers. The letters had been mailed from America. Our people who watch the steamers there found no trace of him, although it was thought he might have slipped through Ellis Island with some gang of laborers bound for the coal mines or railroad construction work. These people are protected by their own class. But he came back, drawn by the rumor of the girl's infidelity. Her name was Tatiana Leova."

"A peasant?"

Taub shook his head.

"A silk-weaver. The boy thought he had killed her, and fled to the coast to catch an outbound vessel. The girl was befriended by this same Militza and taken into her *entourage* as maid. That is why she is beloved of the peasantry. She is an elder sister to all women in trouble in eastern Europe. She has secret agents among the women themselves. I tell you, Max, she carries on as insidious and dangerous a work in her own way as ever her father did! By helping the underlings, and sympathizing with them, she incites them to rebellion and discontent."

THE Prince rose and stretched himself with the lazy, relaxed grace of a healthy young animal.

"We can not stop her, Taub. As for breeding rebellion, you and I know that the hardest phase we have to contend with is the volatile natures of my well-beloved compatriots. So long as they trust you, you may depend on them, but they are fitful, changeable and, above all, suspicious."

"I did not know that you had given the matter such thought," Taub interposed.

"Did you not? But I have. You told me in New York three days ago, when you and Nick found me, that Morvaria needed me, that posterity called on me to save it

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from being born under the flags of Russia, or Austria-Hungary. Very well. I am here. But, Taub, I do not hold with these ancient ethics and international shaking of dice. Our law must stand on something higher and more immovable than the caprices of cabinets, parliaments, or reichstags; yes, or the popular whim of a passing generation, or a sovereign who may be dead clay to-morrow. There must be brotherhood and equity among the nations. That is why I hesitate at this crisis. Otto lies dying——"

"He is probably dead by this," interrupted Taub placidly.

"Even so. Until I reach Lenar his death will be concealed. You tell me that the people will welcome me as his successor, that they hope I will unravel this knot of intrigue and deceit, of diplomatic hide-and-seek which they have been playing while my uncle amused himself going mad. I hope they do. I hope they will like me and are loyal. It will make my task pleasanter."

"You mean——"

"I mean that I flatly do not like the imperialistic game, and I refuse to play it according to established custom. In Morvaria you have three parties. You belong to what we call the Home Patriots, the Old Guard, which places the weal of the nation above the love of king or any man. No matter who may sit upon the throne, Morvaria must stand secure by herself. Uncle Otto holds to yet a different theory. With Austria and Germany to back him up, and one hand reaching out to Russia on the side, he held to the God-given rights of kings, and has clung to his remnant of majesty even while he lost his wits. I don't want to be that sort of king, Taub. And, standing apart from both these parties, there is the other, which, for lack of a better name, we call the destroyers, the revolutionists."

"—— rascals!" said Taub fervently.

Max laughed.

"But that does not remove them from the game, my Taub. You can not deny their existence, nor that they are to-day the greatest force that Morvaria or any other monarchy has to consider. The Old Guard passes. They march toward the grave, the final bivouac, God rest their simple souls! The royalists should be urged to precede them, for the good of mankind. It is their follies and crimes that have bred, out of the decay of centuries, this promising youngster we call socialism. I don't give a rap, Taub, for the good will of the party which has preyed on Uncle Otto and the state treasury for years. I think we shall remove them from office, you and I, Taub, old boy. The Old Guard may remain so long as it does not obstruct the path of progress."

"I did not believe the rumors I heard of you." Taub's face was pale and grim. He faced the Prince uncompromisingly. "I was told by our secret police that you had fraternized with these people and that you sympathized with them."

"Partially, it is true. I am no coward either to myself or to others. I found many friends among them after I had been exiled from Morvaria."

"Friends among those at Lenar?"

"There and in America. Don't you see, Taub, it is politic for me to be broadminded, to see this thing first-hand and know for myself what it means to you and to me and Morvaria and all the world? I should be a poor excuse as a man and prospective king if I told myself this danger was a ghost to vanish at the crowing of Chanticleer."

"Then why undertake this farce?" Taub's stout face suddenly reddened with suppressed emotion. "Why have you fooled me—why have you consented to return with me, to take your place as king? Even while we love you——"

He stopped short. The Prince had risen also, and stood beside the table, looking down at him, eyes full of cool, sane deliberation, mouth resolute and close. Something in his expression checked the Baron. He leaned heavily on the table, his fists clenched, his head bowed.

"You must not desert us, your Highness," he said huskily. "Do not be dazzled by the flicker of a red flag beside the black and gold of Morvaria's eagles."

CHAPTER VII

MILITZA'S VOW

ACROSS the narrow passage was the suite of Madame Pavlova and her niece. It was the outside suite. The door of the tiny saloon opened directly on deck. There were two adjoining rooms. Madame Pavlova occupied one, her niece the other. On a couch in the salon slept their maid, a stocky, dark-eyed Morvarian girl.

Before the oval gold rococo mirror sat Militza. She wore peasant's garb, white

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woolen of finest texture, with broad bands of gold and red embroidery at neck, sleeves and side of blouse. Behind her the maid stood, brushing her heavy dark hair. On the couch was Madame Pavlova, calm-featured, stolid as Clotho and knitting as relentlessly. Once that morning, he whom they called the Prince had asked her what it was she was always knitting. It seemed such a tiny article, yet she never seemed to finish it. She had answered in her slow, fateful way:

"I knit white stockings for the children who have no mothers to knit for them."

"Orphans, madame?"

"Yes," she answered calmly. "Of massacres. I can knit one pair in two days and it is a fancy stitch. All mothers knit a fancy stitch for their little ones' stockings, so I do the same, that the children will not know a difference and have their hearts ache."

Now and then Militza glanced up at the peaceful old face above the tireless fingers clicking the steel needles.

"It rests me to watch Tanta knit," she said with a smile. "It reconciles me someway to fate. The next stitch is so inevitable that all may round out into the perfect whole."

"Excellenza," Andre urged gravely, "pray forget Tanta and her hosiery for orphans. Please to concentrate your mind on what I have to tell. I have made inquiries. The lad in the steerage is Estvan. He does not know that we are aboard yet. I think he follows the same spoor."

The girl who was combing Militza's long dark hair spoke in a sullen undertone, side-glancing at the courier.

"He will desert it, if he catches sight of you, Fox-eye."

Andre shrugged his shoulders and smiled. He acted with greater freedom than any servant would have dared to, and yet there was never-failing admiration, almost veneration in tone and look when he turned to Militza.

"If it comes, it comes."

"Tatiana, be still." Madame Pavlova spoke with serene authority. "If he does not know that we are aboard, why should he take this boat? There are many sailing. Why the same boat?—the same hour?"

"He has as much right to return as we have," Militza said slowly. "He is a fearless boy, and a patriot at heart. He knows that Morvaria will lie bleeding soon. Andre mixes private grudges with public weal. We have nothing to do with Estvar Nagy, the blacksmith's son. We should have no personal sensibilities left, no feuds to fulfil, no private loves nor hates. We are as people set apart for a sacrifice. We are as good as dead now."

Andre glanced at her sharply. Obviously her reckless tone perturbed him.

"Does the sacrifice regret when it is already too late?"

"If it does, then it is unfit for holy uses and is cast aside, my Andre," she smiled back at him over one shoulder. "Do not fear for me. I know why you and Tanta here, and even you, Tatiana, whom I befriended, were assigned as my guard on this voyage of horror."

"Not guard, Excellenza," broke in Andre eagerly. "Your supporters and protectors, if the need came."

She shook her head, still smilingly, but with a fatalistic gloom in her dark eyes.

"You do not need to keep me good-tempered, like a child. I tell you I do not regret, nor do I fear. Do you think I ever forget that last night at Lenar? Do you think this gospel of the brotherhood of man means nothing to me when I, Militza of Vilma, can stand beside Renalt, the blacksmith, and call him comrade-brother, and accept from him my commission? Does it mean nothing to me?" She laughed, and leaned forward, watching, not the courier but her own face reflected in the mirror.

"YOU people are born to this," she continued in a clear, vibrant tone. "You nurse it from your mothers, the toil-burdened women of labor; you catch it from your fathers' lips with your first lispings. I never heard of it until suddenly the news was brought to me by you, Andre, that my father, the Grand Duke Leo, lay foully murdered at Crombers by this Baron Taub and his police hounds. And I asked you why. Do you remember? I asked what it was he had done. You told me his crime lay in deserting his own class and taking to his heart the wrongs of the people. You opened my eyes and told me to look over my father's little duchy, and see how happy and free its peasants were, how he had worked steadily, secretly, for years, bringing order and fraternity out of medieval chaos. I asked you why he had

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chosen to lead a double life—why not be open and frank in his views and cast off the royalty bond entirely? You told me the hour had not come, that all must work secretly, steadily, undermining organized society, as we know it, until at the appointed hour——"

"Hush, Excellenza," cautioned Andre huskily. "You speak too freely. Are you sorry that you have undertaken this thing?"

"What if I were?" she demanded slowly.

"Then I will finish it. For that I was sent along."

"And if you were to fail and die in the attempt?" she smiled at him. "Perhaps Estvan would take it up and finish it. Perhaps the powers which stretch so mysteriously beyond and about us have sent him after us, to make sure that the blow shall fall, though each of us here were to prove too weak to strike it. Then Estvan would do it."

"Do you pity the Prince, Excellenza?" Andre's voice was eager and sharp.

She put the question from her with a quick motion of her hand.

"I pity him and every one who is a victim. My pity enfolds the whole world, clear on and up to the knees of the eternal God whom we are told is pitiful. And I ask Him why all this must be. Yes, I pity the Prince, Andre, yet when I feel tenderhearted I force myself to remember my father as they brought him back to me. They had not even had the grace, the humanity, to wash the blood-stains from his face, Andre. He, the beloved one, came back to us, secretly, by night, to the land he loved, in as poor a wooden box as ever criminal was laid in." Her voice sank to almost a whisper. She stared at the face in the mirror with eyes that saw it not.

"They brought him up to my rooms, you know, by the secret staircase behind the fireplace in the lower gallery. Ditmar, the gamekeeper, and his four sons, brought him to me. Messengers had already arrived from my uncles in Germany and Russia. The thing—the ghastly, horrible crime,—was to be delicately silenced, strangled at its birth. The people must not know. The world was not to know. It was given out that the Grand Duke had died suddenly at one of his hunting-lodges. Do you remember? I kept guard all the night through, while you and Ditmar attended him, took the poor, blood-stained garments off and dressed him in his favorite uniform, with the sable-trimmed cloak around him.

"And at daylight they opened the palace doors to the people. Can you know how I felt, kneeling beside him while they trooped by, knowing that under the medals of honor on his breast there was a bullet wound from Taub; knowing of the sabercuts on his poor body, when Taub's men had cornered him and worried him like a stag at bay? I could hear them weeping around me, the men and women and children who had loved him like a father. And a hatred for my order, my class, my people, filled my heart. I wanted to be like him. I wanted to hold out hands to the poor and helpless, and pull them up to the sunlight of God. I wanted to be one of you. And I vowed I would be, there beside his murdered body."

"You have kept the vow, comrade," Andre said in a stifled voice, his head bowed in his hands. Tanta had stopped her knitting and covered her face with both hands, rocking to and fro.

MILITZA nodded her head slowly, her face full of dreamy retrospective reverie.

"I have tried to, but I made a mistake, Andre. I forgot that the way led through fields of scarlet poppies, fields of blood. I forgot that if I were asked, I must give my share to the crimson sacrifice. I thought all I should have to do would be to help, to give to the poor, to better conditions, and use my influence to let light in on the dark rat-holes of crime. I did not know that I should be asked to kill a man in cold blood."

For the first time Tanta spoke. Her eyes were full of tears and soft with brooding motherliness. She was a distant relative of the Grand Duke's and had been Militza's foster-mother since her birth.

"Let Andre do it, child," she said fervently. "Thou art too young. God knows thou art too young!"

"You have seen what I have seen in his eyes?" Andre leaned forward, looking into her face, compelling her to meet his gaze.

"I have seen nothing in his eyes but goodwill and friendliness," responded the girl.

"He looks at you with eyes of love."

"Does he? So soon? Andre, you are old. You have forgotten what love is. It is not

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admiration. A man looks on one woman and he admires her eyes because they remind him of eyes he has loved secretly. He looks at another and admires her mouth, her chin, because they bring back to him a mouth and chin, a pulsing throat that he has worshiped some time in his life. Only once in a lifetime does a man find his perfect ideal—mouth, chin, hair, eyes, form, voice, grace, charm, soul—united in one woman. And when he finds that one woman, Andre, he loves."

"Who has told thee this, comrade?" Andre smiled back at her. "If I have forgotten what love is, surely thou hast just found out its spell. There is a new light in your eyes, a new tenderness to your lips, a new softness to your voice. And he lingers at your side constantly."

"Did you not bid me win his confidence?"

She rose suddenly, pushing back her long hair from her face, her dark eyes wide and angry.

"You are choking me with your distrust and suspicion! Go away from me now. I will talk no more. If you are afraid of my failing, kill me to stop my mouth, and lead yourself. But if not, you shall leave me alone. If I do this thing that I have sworn to do, I will do it in my own way, and you have no word in the matter, except to send the news of fulfilment and of my death afterward."

"You will not die," Andre interposed moodily. "This is an American line. You are young and beautiful. The Americans never kill a young and beautiful woman criminal. This is not Russia. It will be said that you are eccentric, and hot tempered, possibly insane. It will blow over. Even if you are given up for extradition, it will be smothered up as the death of your father was. And Morvaria will be free! The first nation in the world to be ruled by the brotherhood! The first to hold the true torch of liberty up to the world, not the tarnished, insensate goddess we have just left behind us, but a living, uplifting spirit of peace and fellowship, who shall bring back the golden age to man! Is it not worth while, comrade?"

Her hands fell wearily to her sides, the anger died from her eyes. She looked tired.

"It is all beautiful," she said slowly. "Beautiful, but first, Andre, the scarlet poppies."

Andre bowed over her slim white hand and kissed it in fervent love and loyalty.

"First the field of scarlet poppies, comrade," he repeated.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BLACKSMITH'S SON

"I HAVE a great desire to see these people, to go down among them. They are more human than we are, if humanity is gaged by its capacity for suffering."

It was the following morning. The steerage had been let out, like so many animals, for exercise in the open air. Above them, on the third-cabin level, stood Militza and Serrano. They were on a sort of gallery, overlooking the deck of the steerage. For over an hour they had been together, pacing the upper deck. From one point of vantage Madame Pavlova watched them, wrapped in a rug in a steamer chair, with her knitting in her hands.

From another point, well up forward, Taub watched, his cap pulled low over his eyes, his cloak collar turned up so that one caught only a glimpse of his gray, aggressive mustache-points and fiery old eyes glowering out at the world from beneath shaggy, level brows.

Yet, under fire from the two, Militza paced calmly, almost happily, back and forth with Nick by her side. Sometimes she would glance at him and laugh. And seeing the long, steady glance between the two, Tanta's needles would click sharply, and Taub would turn and stare moodily out to sea, and smile.

It would not be long now, he thought. It was the fourth day out. Two more, and they would sight Gibraltar, then up the blue Mediterranean to Trieste, and on to Lenar by rail.

They might have chosen a faster steamer, but he had purposely avoided the popular, crowded boats. He had followed the couple at a distance, when they started below. Not from any feeling of espionage, but rather to try and discover the motives of her Excellenza. He had been sent by Morvaria to bring back its heir apparent, and he intended that his trust should be fulfilled, no matter who was sacrificed.

Andre was not in sight. For the first time since he had left Renalt at Lenar, Andre was preoccupied. He had lost the

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trend of moving events, of ever-present danger, that morning, through too close an application to detail. In fact, at that moment Andre was closeted in his own cabin with the Albanian steward, who already had his pockets well lined from Taub.

Militza leaned over the railing, looking very girlish and serious. She wore no head covering, except a deep mauve veil over her dark hair, falling back from one shoulder. Nick watched her, not the mass of people below on the steerage deck. A few steps away from them a companionway led down to the lower deck, and beside it stood Taub, stolid and deliberate.

"Why is he afraid for your safety while you are with me?" Militza asked in one of her daring moods of dallying with fate. "He never permits you out of his sight."

"Taub is more experienced than either you or I. He is personally responsible, it appears, for my safe conduct, and the responsibility weighs upon him. He would like it better if I would keep to the stateroom during the entire voyage."

"As your friend, Lieutenant Serrano, does?" she asked lightly. "I have seen him only twice in two days. I do not think he approves of me."

Serrano smiled, looking away from her at the heads below.

"He is an indolent sort of a chap, and he does not care for shipboard life."

Militza did not reply. A sudden gleam of interest shot to her eyes. Over near the port rail stood a man, hardly past boyhood. He was short and stocky, like most Hungarians, but his whole pose was full of grace and a certain aloof dignity that separated him from those around him. Gray eyes, heavy, straight, dark brows, grave uncurved lips, with a thin, youthful mustache uplifting slightly above them. Something about the figure was instantly familiar, and even while she looked the eyes glanced up and saw her. It was the blacksmith's son from Lenar, her father's close comrade and companion whenever he chose to become Leo Pavlovavitch.

"They are letting the steerage out all day," Nick said. "This weather makes them restive and ill."

"How strange it is! If we were on a sailing vessel we should be becalmed for days at this rate."

SHE looked up at the sky. The sun looked absurdly small, with orange-colored, smoky clouds overhanging it. The very air was heavy with the same curious orange haze and the sea lay like glass, copper-colored, with great reaches of grayish green underlying it. Every now and then a long swell would curve its surface in a mammoth ripple, and die down.

"At home, when we have these days, we know the volcanoes are awakening somewhere," Militza added. "Do you think it is that?"

"Possibly. We are approaching a volcanic zone, and it is near the equinox. There are bound to be disturbances. We may have a storm yet before we enter the Mediterranean. It is often this way. It is along here, you know, they say Atlantis lies, and never rests in peace. Every now and then it fights for freedom from the ocean, and tries to rise. Therefore the coral reefs, and many islands. It manages to lift a mountain-peak above the sea, and navigators add an island to their charts."

"I did not know your Highness was so proficient in ocean lore," she smiled up at him. "You have crossed once, I believe?"

"Oh, I have been back and forth often"—he checked himself abruptly—"in spirit. I have been a Gypsy in my love for travel ever since I was a boy."

"They say there is a Gypsy strain in my veins too, and I love them—with all their carelessness and squalor, I love them." Her tone was lowered. She was still looking down at the man from Lenar. "They are so vivid, so full of love of life, and true to their own tribal law. One should be true to a vow, do you not think so, Prince, at all hazards, even if it meant the loss of everything, of life, not one's own perhaps, but of one more dear than oneself?"

"No, I do not think so," answered Serrano earnestly. "A vow is a temperamental thing, an accident of the moment. Above all, it is personal. Many vows are so mad, so ill judged, that even the gods decline to take note of them, it is said. If I were to vow to kill one from vengeance, or other motives, for instance, and then saw my error, would I not be justified in crawfishing, as they say in the admirably elastic and sensible country we have left behind us? I think so. Particularly if it involved

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the safety and welfare of others. Take the case of young Estvan Nagy." He did not see her start and turn toward him, shielding from his view that figure on the port side. "He vowed to return and kill the girl whom he thought unfaithful to him."

"She was not unfaithful. She loved him dearly," broke in Militza vehemently. "I befriended her afterward, while she was in the hospital."

"Then he was the more mistaken, and it bears out what I was saying. His vow was a foolish one. He should have simply found out the truth and not acted on impulse. But he vows he will take vengeance, and, at all hazard, he returns to Lenar, even with a price set on his own head for complicity in the affair at Crombers!"

She closed her eyes, as if repressing pain, and he suddenly remembered.

"I beg your pardon. I am so blunt, so clumsy in speech, Excellenza. Forgive me. I did not intend to speak of the cursed place."

"And why should you not? It happened. It is the truth, and I am quite hardened to it all now. Go on with what you were saying."

"I won't. Come back to the upper deck. This place is unhealthy. It breeds discord and controversy. That is the only fault I find with the submerged tenth."

She smiled, but was silent. The memory of that face among the steerage masses stood out in her mind. Why was Estvan on that steamer? He had not been a comrade of the Lenar brotherhood for over a year. She had heard of him as a worker in London and Paris, but knew he had no share in the present movement in Morvaria against Otto and his dynasty. She had not even seen him since before her father's death, three years ago.

AS SHE walked along the hurricane deck, she recalled the lad, who had always been a favorite at the castle. He had been quiet and absorbed, wonderfully kind to animals and children, almost compassionate. She wondered now if he was in trouble, and longed to help him, as her father would have done. Andre could not see him for her. Old as he was, Andre had loved the girl Tatiana, and it was because of his attentions to her that Estvan had stabbed her.

Serrano noticed she was preoccupied, and when she finally made an excuse and left him, he stood watching her until the turn of the corridor hid her from sight. Taub approached and spoke, but he shook his head and strolled away, thinking over many things not connected with the accession to the throne.

Militza went directly to her suite. She knew at that hour Madame Pavlova would be sunning herself on deck, and that Andre would not come to her. The girl, Tatiana, sat before the open deck door, sewing on a torn dinner-gown and singing softly to herself a lullaby the mountain women crooned in the hamlets above Lenar.

Militza closed the door softly and crossed the room to the couch.

"Tatiana, I would speak with you alone," she said, laying her hands over the girl's fingers. "You must be strong-nerved and without sentimental fears, for I need your help. Neither Tanta nor Andre can help me now, only you yourself. You understand?"

The girl glanced up with startled, questioning eyes and met the steady gaze of the Grand Duchess before she answered. What she saw there satisfied her, for she threw her head back impulsively and lifted the slim white hands to her lips.

"My life is yours, Excellenza!" she said passionately. "Did you not shield and save it when all the world turned from me?"

"Hush, it is nothing tragic I need you for, child, only I want you to be strong. Estvan is on board."

Tatiana gave a startled cry and sank on the floor, her hands pressed over her face.

"I told you to be strong," Militza repeated, bending forward and laying her hands on the girl's shoulders. "I want you to carry a message to him from me."

"Where is he?" asked Tatiana, after a minute. She raised her head from her hands and looked up at the beautiful face before her, her eyes wide and fearful.

"Why are you afraid? He will not harm you again. I only want you to get a message to him secretly, and bring me back the answer."

"I do not fear that he will hurt me, Excellenza," the girl said proudly. "I love him. When he believed me untrue to our betrothal vows, did he not stab me deeper than with the knife? Can that wound heal?"

Militza turned to the writing-desk. What she sought was not there. She stepped into

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her own stateroom. When she came back she had a small book in her hand. She sat down at the desk, and went over it quietly, page by page, with a small glass stylus, touching a letter here and there, apparently at random, and using invisible ink.

"There," she said softly, after a few minutes. "It is safe to hand that to him, I am sure. Tell the stewards he is your cousin, anything you like, and give him that book. He will understand. We have used books before as a means of communication. And to-night he will return it to you, remember. Go, Tatiana."

Tatiana hesitated, her eyes begging mutely for respite, but Militza did not meet them. She rose, with a deep sigh, and stood in the open doorway, gazing moodily out at the dead, sulphur-colored sea.

"Go, Tatiana," she repeated again, and the girl went out, her lips pressed together, the color gone from her young face.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE STEERAGE

MADAME PAVLOVA'S maid was distinctive among the other women servants of the *Prinzessin Luise's* first cabin ladies. Probably that accounted for the attention she attracted as she passed through the long, narrow saloons on her way to the lower decks.

She was young, not over nineteen, and short, like most Morvarian girls. Instead of the customary maid's garb, she wore her native dress, a light weight, cream-tinted woolen gown, short in the skirt, with long white apron, and heavily embroidered at neck, sleeves and down one side of the loose blouse, with the rich-hued embroidery you will find the peasant girls making out in the meadows above Lenar as they tend their geese or goats.

When she reached the stairway leading to the steerage a steward stopped her and demanded her errand there. She at once assumed her most innocent and most expressionless look and handed him the book.

"For my cousin," she said in poor French.

"Name?"

"Tatiana Leova."

"Cousin's name?"

For a second she hesitated, not knowing what name Estvan might be traveling under. Then she spoke the truth, trusting to fortune.

"Estvan Nagy."

Still the man stood there, glancing over the little book. The general appearance of the girl interested him.

"I can not allow you to go to him," he said finally, with an upglancing smile at her.

Tatiana had traveled far from Lenar and its simplicities. She understood perfectly the meaning of that appraising, ingratiating glance. She left a crushed bill in his hand, and waited.

He smoothed it out and still smiled.

"You may wait here, and I will bring you his answer," he said.

Several minutes she lingered in the darkened passage and, hearing quick footsteps, turned to face, not the steward, but Estvan himself.

His dark young face looked haggard and thin, but when he saw her there before him his eyes shone. She did not attempt to shrink from him, although the last time when they had met thus, face to face, he had left three knife-wounds in her body. Yet she was unprepared for his next action. Catching her to him hungrily, fiercely, he pressed back her head and found her lips.

"Let me go, let me go, Estvan!" she pleaded, struggling to escape. "The steward will return."

"Not this way," he whispered. "I have paid him to leave us alone together for five minutes. Come!"

His voice was husky and unsteady as he released her and led the way around the passageway until it opened on the lower deck where the steerage passengers were given their daily airing.

Estvan removed his cap and leaned against the railing, staring at the girl.

"Did you look through the book?" she asked in Morvarian.

"No. I only look at you, sweetheart!"

She flushed suddenly at the ardor in his tone and glance, but there was still bitterness in her voice and steady, accusing eyes.

"You call me that, after you stabbed me to kill, on the strength of a lie?"

"I believed the lie."

"Does one believe every flying rumor about one he loves?"

"You were seen with this fellow Andre, night after night. He sent you letters secretly. You replied to them—secretly.

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You worked together at the silk mills, apart from the rest of the workers, talking, talking, talking—secretly. I heard of it all, and went mad. And when I wrote asking you why, you would not tell."

"There was nothing to tell," answered Tatiana with dignity. "If you had but asked your own father, you would have heard the truth."

"My father?"

SHE nodded at him, and slowly knowledge dawned in the narrow, saddened eyes that watched her. He stretched out his two hands toward her swiftly.

"Tatiana, tell me! You are——"

She laid her finger on her lips, but took one of his hands and gripped it softly.

"You have been away so long that you lose track of us at Lenar," she said gently. "Why do you return now?"

"I am not bound for home. I leave the steamer at Trieste and go back to London by rail."

"Why?" she persisted. He shrugged his shoulders and echoed her own words.

"There is nothing to tell."

"Are you here—on this boat, because of us?"

He saw the distrust in her eyes and spoke kindly, earnestly.

"I did not know that you were aboard until I saw the Excellenza herself to-day."

Involuntarily the girl sighed with relief.

"Then it is some one else—this time?"

"Some one else," repeated Estvan serenely. "Some one else this time, my Tatiana."

Behind them sounded a footstep and the steward's face showed at the doorway with a motion to them to return.

"I will send the book back to-night without fail," Estvan said, giving the girl's hand a close pressure, and left her.

She went back to the first cabin with a feeling of strange happiness and elation. She had seen the man she loved, talked with him, kissed him, touched his hands. Only to a girl of her blood and nation could such a meeting mean so much.

He had stabbed her a year ago, fully intending to kill her. But why, she had reasoned with herself? Because he thought her false to him. She had met Andre at the silk-mills, as one of the secret brotherhood, and he had introduced her, with other girl workers, to the council that met up at Renalt's shop by night. That was all. Yet to Estvan it had meant only one thing, her infidelity to her vows of betrothal to him. It was the very highest compliment he could have paid their love, to deem it worthy of such a sacrifice.

Behind her, at a safe distance, came the Albanian steward. He watched carefully which stateroom she entered, and returned, with her donation and Estvan's safe in his pocket, and a choice bit of news to transfer to the Taub party. Andre, too, had engaged his services, as being the open door, so to speak, to the steerage, but the Baron's donation had been the larger, and he smiled as he returned the courier's salutation and passed along. This news belonged to the better paying party.

CHAPTER X

OCEAN PERILS

WHEN Taub heard it he said nothing, but smoked. It was his favorite method of expressing his opinion most strongly. The two younger men treated it more lightly.

"You would make treason and conspiracy out of a love-affair, Baron," said Max, smoking his cigarette down to the very tip. "What more natural than that this girl should endeavor to get into communication with her old-time lover?"

"After he stabbed her? Pouf!" growled Taub. "Do women walk upon a naked sword and smile?"

"They do, when they love. Did your spy get a chance at this little book he tells of?"

"Yes. The lad showed it to him freely. Said his cousin had borrowed it from him in New York. Described places where he had worked there recently. He is a steel-riveter by trade."

Serrano smiled at that. "They're clever dogs," he said.

"They should be exterminated!" exclaimed Taub, excitedly. "So would I do to them—all—all! I would gather them in one place, like so many lost dogs, and I would asphyxiate them!"

"And in so doing, my Taub, you would be worse than they, as a law-breaker and an intolerant fanatic," said Max quietly. "There are better ways. They must be

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educated, and led by degrees. When I am king we will find a way to weld all classes in a common brotherhood and interest, eh, Taub?"

"I will not talk with you," answered the Baron sadly, folding his arms on his chest. "Our dreams are different. My heart aches for Morvaria."

"And mine for her poor, misguided people," returned Max. "If I find on my return that Uncle Otto is dead, and that I am truly king, if my people demand a republic, and I know they are able to rule themselves, they shall have it."

"And we will elect you first president, Baron," added Serrano.

"I should rather die now, on this trip!" said Taub, and something in his tone, some hidden undercurrent of fatalistic warning, struck both men. There was silence for a minute, while the old man stood at the table, staring at his Prince.

"For heaven's sake, let's go on deck!" exclaimed Serrano, with an effort to break the tension. "This weather has us all unbalanced."

As they started out and paced along the hurricane deck Serrano paused once before several life-rafts, lashed in place.

"A pleasant thing to have under one in mid-ocean," he remarked.

Max laughed. "Let's see what they are staring at yonder."

The port rails were lined with passengers, watching a mass of dead porpoises, bellies upturned pinkly, floating sluggishly on the surface of the sea a few rods from the steamer's course.

"They look as though they had been in an explosion," Serrano said. "The carcases are torn. A submarine eruption would do it."

Taub nodded.

"It is an eruption certainly. This boat passed over this same course one week ago, yes, no? During that time there have been eruptions, no doubt. It is in the air yet. I can smell the fumes. Is it not likely that uncharted masses may have been upheaved in that time?"

Serrano nodded.

"We can not tell what lies ahead. Why worry?" Serrano rose and stood gazing out of the window, his hands deep in his pockets, his chin thrust forward aggressively. "We're in the game and it's up to us to put up as good a fight as we are able, each man. Max wins a kingdom, you a certain ideal, and I myself, a certain satisfaction neither of you can appreciate, in seeing the right side come out on top. Max is my friend. I would do anything to help him swing this issue. That is why I am here. But, frankly, I want to tell you both, I never dreamed of getting in over my head as I have, perforce, with this confounded masquerade trick of yours, Baron. Where do I come out after Max leaves me at Trieste?"

TAUB looked at the American with somber gloom.

"I do not think you will need to worry, my boy," he answered. "You are suddenly called upon to act a part distasteful to you, is it not so? Yet Militza is desirable, is she not? Ah, you need not shrug your shoulders and look annoyed. I am old enough to speak the truth to you. You love her. That is well. Perhaps then, you may be able to forgive her."

"Forgive her—what?"

Taub raised his bushy eyebrows and spoke in a lowered tone.

"The spy who is a steward brings me word of conversation between the Grand Duchess and her *entourage*. It is my belief that they plot against the life of the Prince."

"Good God!" exclaimed Max. "And you allow Nick to face my danger?"

"Be calm," pleaded Taub. "The thing is out of our power now."

"The soundings this morning told a peculiar story," said Nick. "I heard it talked of in the smoker after lunch, when you and Max were away. If the lead is to be believed, the floor of the ocean has risen, where we are now passing, some four thousand feet since the steamer crossed last."

"About six hundred and seventy fathoms," Taub remarked, leaning out over the rail, as though he expected to pierce the waters with his gaze. "It is very odd, but not mysterious. Such a phenomenon of nature occurs on land. Why not at sea? It is more infrequent, or, possibly, more unobserved than on land. In the southern Pacific, it is of frequent occurrence. New islands, new reefs, are constantly appearing where yesterday the soundings showed thousands of fathoms depths. It is said that hundreds of islands, not alone

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in the South Seas, but north as far as the Aleutians and in the Japan Sea, are but the rims of submarine craters, submerged monsters trying literally to stick their heads above water. If we could walk under water, we should find ourselves traveling down vast mountain-sides into the depths of the sea, possibly through dead cities such as our world has not dreamed of."

"But the lower cabins do not reason so deeply as yourself, my Baron," said Max lightly, with his ever-ready smile. "The stewards tell stories of trouble. The women refused to go to bed last night in the third cabin, and the steerage pray and tremble. They say it is the end of the world."

"Pouf!" growled Taub. "Fools! Pigs! Worse than children, who at least have faith. Why do they fear?"

"There are all the signs and portents apparent. Many falling stars the first night out; the moon and sun both look as though dipped in blood. There is this sulphurous haze that chokes one, and this awful, unnatural calm that overhangs the deep. There are the dead fish we pass constantly. There are many signs and portents, my Taub, and even Nick here was caught regarding a life-raft with reflective eyes. I shall be glad when we pass into fresh air again and sight the Canaries."

"Where is her Excellenza?" asked Serrano abruptly.

The Grand Duchess was not on deck with the others apparently. Madame Pavlova kept to her steamer chair. She had been dozing intermittently, when suddenly shouts and cries from below roused her. The first-cabin people said little, but stared at the wonderful sight before them with blanched faces and set lips.

Miles to the southeast they saw waterspouts rise, swaying heavenward like vast genii-like shapes. The sea seemed to have turned into a chaotic horror, so charged with unknown dangers that it left the very heart paralyzed with terror.

Serrano was the only human being who stirred. Turning from the rail, he started for the entrance to the cabin. Max saw him and guessed his intention. He smiled, and spoke quietly.

"Do nothing rash. We may survive yet."

But Nick pressed forward to where he knew Militza's stateroom lay.

CHAPTER XI

THE DEATH OF BARON TAUB

"THERE was no sound," Taub said. "It will come in a moment."

Almost before he had ceased speaking, there came over the face of the strange molten-hued ocean a tremendous, reverberating roar, a roll of sound that seemed to shake all the heavens. It was thunder, but choked, gasping, frightful thunder.

"My God!" muttered Max, his blue eyes half closed as he bent forward, staring at the strange spectacle. "What next, my Taub?"

"It is a sea-quake," said Taub calmly. "We are favored. The tidal wave will roll to the south, maybe, and escape us. If not, then we die presently. Did I not say it was submarine volcanoes?"

"What if it should reach us?" asked Max teasingly. "Will it not be sufficient excuse to those at Lenar if they know Baron Taub could give safe conduct to me and guard against all dangers excepting water-spouts and sea-quakes. You will be exonerated, Taub, believe me. They will erect monuments to our memory yet at Lenar."

"I serve God, the king, my country and my conscience," said the old man steadfastly. "We can do but what we can do. No man can war against the forces of nature. Yet do I think the wave will move to the southward."

He stopped. From below decks came a sound like the echo of the sea-quake. Growling, grumbling, it rose higher in volume. The first-cabin passengers, thronging the gunwales, staring out to where the sea seemed to be rising to meet the sky, turned and looked at one another. Officers of the ship appeared, passing rapidly from group to group, reassuring, quieting, but the people waited, expecting some unimaginable terror yet to come, believing nothing that was told them.

Madame Pavlova dropped her knitting, something she had never been guilty of before, dropped it, and leaned against the steamer-chair heavily. People were beginning to pour out of every entrance. Among the first to come were Militza and Serrano. She made her way with difficulty to the side of Tanta and tried to support her, but the throng about were pushing and pressing toward amidships, where the boats were.

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Taub and his tall blond companion were together. Already they had begun to lend aid, with other men, to restore order and confidence and help the swooning women.

"If I could get her to a more secluded spot," began Militza. "Can you help me, Prince Max?"

A strange look crossed the face of the man beside her. He opened his lips as though to correct her, but left the words unuttered. Instead, he relieved the girl of her burden as she tried to lift Madame Pavlova from the chair.

"Let me do that," he said cheerily. "She has only fainted for a minute. The air is very suffocating. It is better to stay here by the rail. They are pushing away from us, down to the boats."

"What is the matter?"

"The steerage passengers are frightened by the explosion. They are trying to rush the upper decks."

"What if they do?"

"They will not. They will be forced back."

"How dark it is growing!" said the girl, "I can scarcely draw my breath."

A ship's officer was near them, making his way slowly through the mass of people. As he neared them, Nick attracted his attention.

"The nearest way?" he asked.

SILENTLY the man pointed to the same side they were on, but farther back from the forward deck, back to where a little while before Max and Nick Serrano had stood looking at the life-rafts.

"What is it?" asked Militza quickly.

Nick made no reply. With Madame Pavlova supported on one arm, and holding her own hand in his, as if she were a child, he started back, and paused.

"It is too late now," he said quietly. "Wait here with me."

The roar became a volume of inarticulate shrieks and wails. Out of the bedlam sounded the report of shots, cracks that whipped and cut the heavy air. The second-cabin passengers were pouring to the upper decks, crowding, rushing, fleeing before that mob of lunatics in the steerage. Beating at them, calling, trying to calm them, to force them back, the crew worked with steady, organized force, but it was like attempting to stem an earthquake.

Taub and his companion were trying to reach the Grand Duchess, to render assistance, but it was impossible.

And with that human roar there joined another, a strange, far-off rumbling as of millions of cannon dragging over heavy roads, as though all the hosts of heaven and hell were pouring out of their habitations to fight the war of worlds.

"The engines have stopped," said Militza, drawing her breath in with a desperate effort. "How afraid every one is, the poor, poor things!"

"You're not," smiled Serrano, his eyes full of admiration and feeling as he turned and looked at her.

"Nor you," she smiled back confidently. "Why should one be? If it is death?" she shrugged her shoulders slightly. "What is death? The passing, that is all. The mode matters little, after all. Poor Tanta, she is regaining consciousness."

The woman with the peasant face opened her eyes and looked about her, at Militza, at he whom they called the Prince, at the panic-stricken, stumbling, cursing, trampling, swaying mass of crazed humanity, and then at the copper-hued sky overhead, a sky that looked as though it smoked, luridly, suffocatingly. Out of the babel of shrieks they caught one high cry of despair.

"The sea is on fire! The water is boiling hot!"

Then, even at that moment of supreme terror, a terror that made all mankind join hands in mutual fellowship against nature's forces that had turned traitor to them, there came a strange touch of human interest.

As the steerage passengers swarmed up through the deserted saloons Estvan Nagy led among the fore-runners. Young, strong and virile, he was almost the first to reach the deck, but as he pushed forward Tatiana's arms reached up to him from the crowd jammed between the entrance to the library and the deck anteroom. No words passed between them. He reached down and tried to pull her out of the press to him, managed to get her behind him and drag her forward to the open air.

They reached the deck with the first pack of fortunate ones. Already the cry had gone up for the boats, and life-preservers were being dragged out and tossed about as if in an insane game of play.

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Estvan had a curious sense that he was treading on soft bodies of women who had been trodden underfoot, but he was not sure. With Tatiana in his arms he would have followed the crowd to the boats, when all at once he caught sight of the man he sought most of all in the world, the man for whom he had given up his part in the brotherhood work and now hunted on his own private quest for vengeance. Not personal vengeance. He held no grudge against him, save as every true comrade hated his shadow as an enemy to the advancement of the cause. But he, Estvan, hated him solely because he had witnessed the killing of Leo Pavlovavitch at Crombers, when this gray-haired, rugged old fighter had given the order that brought death to the Grand Duke.

Therefore Estvan hunted him.

"What is it?" asked Tatiana, clinging to him closer, as she felt his grip relax. Estvan hesitated. Love was sweet to him, but the savor of this sacrifice to the god of vengeance was sweeter. He laughed softly between his set teeth, laughed and kissed her, crushing her roughly to him, as he had that morning, kissing her soft girlish lips until they stung with pain. Then he pushed her from him, pulling her hands from his shoulders by main force, and started at Taub.

THE Morvarian saw him coming and recognized him. He shouted to the Prince and Nick, but in vain. He was separated from them by a solid wall of human bodies. Estvan leaped like a panther on the Baron—leaped and clung to him. He did not seem to be armed, and Taub was, but he could not reach his revolver. The strong arms of the blacksmith's son pinioned him like a vise. The old man fought, puffing, turning, stamping like a bull, but Estvan forced him back, straight to the rail. Scarcely did he seem to be fighting, but suddenly there was a shift in the positions of the two. Estvan had the other's wrists and, with a sudden twisting movement, he turned the body of the Baron until it caught his shoulder, then lifting it by the tortured wrists, he flung it over his head, over the rail, out into the saffron-colored sea.

Nobody seemed to notice the tragedy. It was merely a part of the monstrous situation everybody was in. Both the Prince and his friend were trying to reach the boats with the two women. Only one long shriek sounded, shrill and high, the cry of the girl Tatiana, as she saw what had happened.

Militza heard, and recognized it.

"Oh, God, what more?" she gasped, trying to turn back, as she saw Estvan's act. But Serrano caught her up bodily in his arms and pushed ahead.

Back at the gunwale, bending far over, and laughing down at the seething, yellow waters, was the Morvarian, Estvan, with Tatiana clinging to him, and he shook one fist at the unseen thing that was hurtling under the waves—the flame-colored waves that the steerage yelled were hot.

CHAPTER XII

ON THE LIFE-RAFT

AT ONE point on the deck they could not move forward. Ahead, they were letting the boats down, trying to get the women and children in first.

"Where is the Baron?" called out Max suddenly. "He was following us a moment ago."

"He has been sent ahead as our *courier de grace*," replied Militza, her face white as ivory with its rich tone, colorless yet warm. She told no more. Behind them, on the lower decks and through the upper saloons, where human beings fought each other like caged beasts in their struggles to reach fresh air, there rose a terrible roar of sound, women's shrieks pealing out pitifully, children wailing, the cries and moans of hundreds who looked on the face of death for the first time and found themselves stark mad at the sight.

"It is like a marine simoon," said Madame Pavlova, calmly, watching the ocean. "The air is like the desert before a simoon. It is very fearful. I have lost my knitting. I do not doubt we shall all die very presently."

Militza was silent. The arm of the man she loved was around her, his hand held hers closely. Death had less terror for her at that moment than life as she had known it the past week.

"Where is Andre?" asked Madame Pavlova suddenly. She turned to go back.

"You can not get through there, Tanta," the girl exclaimed. "Think of yourself."

"There are things which must be saved should we escape," answered the woman

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resolutely. "Andre has them. You remember the papers. Our rooms are on the first passageway. I can reach them."

Militza raised her face to Nick.

"Let her go if it makes her happy. What does it matter how we die, or where, as long as it must come soon? I thank God that it comes in this way to us both!"

He met her gaze with a look of strange intent. Long after, she remembered it. It was as though, in that last supreme moment, he questioned her very soul.

About them surged the screaming, struggling mass of human sufferers. Around the liner all heaven and sea seemed to have been transformed into a seething, boiling hell of strange fires.

As far as they could see, waterspouts reeled drunkenly toward the skies, swaying, tottering, swelling out like hideous demon shapes let loose from long enchantment.

The ocean was a level plain changed in the last ten minutes into a vast, mountainous mass of chaos, upheaving, steaming, surging horribly toward them.

And over it all there came the far-off, frightful, submarine roar of elements at war thousands of leagues below them. Titanic convulsions were taking place in the earthbed that cradles the sea, where the rending of its surface floor had let in water on the secret laboratory of nature herself. Tremendous explosions of gas and steam, driving up, had burst their way from extinct craters in long sunken continents.

"They are letting go the boats," cried Militza. "Your friend is helping. Ah, Mother of Grace, see them crowd the children to one side! I would I could shoot and shoot and shoot amongst them as one would at a lot of rats for their deviltry!"

Her head was bare of covering, but she had caught up a heavy cloak and thrown it about her as she had come from the stateroom. Her hair was loosened by the confusion and fell about her shoulders in curling waves.

They could see it was useless to try to reach the boats. Already the Prince had started toward them again. Tanta had vanished.

"You can't get into the boats! They're swamped now!" he shouted to them. "Follow me!"

Again Nick raised the girl in his strong grasp and literally rammed forward with her to where his friend waited. Together they forced their way until they gained an almost deserted side passage. It led to the spot where they had seen the life-rafts. Already the first boat had struck the sea, and through the din they caught a yell of agony from its occupants.

"The sea is on fire! The water is hot! Take us back!"

In silence the two secured one of the life rafts. Mercifully, Militza had fainted, and they bound her to it with ropes, coiled in readiness for danger on hooks near by, with buoys.

"When the next wave rises, we'll cast it overboard," said Max calmly. "I wonder where Taub is. Can you hang on, or shall I lash you, too?"

"I will hold to the side ropes," answered Nick. "What will you do?"

"What God wills," replied his friend. "Good-by, old fellow. You've got her, anyway."

THE two gripped hands, with oddly smiling faces, and waited. Into the mind of each at that final moment there flashed the memory of their friendship. First, as boys at Eton, they had met, after Serrano's mother had married the second time. She had been a very lovely New Orleans girl, and had lost her husband only a short time after the birth of Nicholas. He had been brought up partly in New Orleans, partly in Washington, and after Madame Serrano's marriage to Sir Edmund Stanell, of the Embassy, they had sent him across to Eton, and later through Oxford.

Young Prince Max had met him at both places, and the friendship formed then had lasted through the years. Nick had drifted naturally into the diplomatic service, and had later settled in Europe, as representative of allied American banking interests. More than once he had been able to help the Prince in his days of exile, and whenever Taub had wished to learn the whereabouts of Maximilian he had sent to Serrano.

"You had better come with us," he said, now, at the final moment, but Max smiled and shook his head.

"I will take my chance with these poor devils," he said. "It's a toss up now which is the safer place, the sea or the ship."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when there came a sound that drowned all the roar of ocean and sky in its awful vol-

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ume. At the same moment they let go the raft, and it caught the upcurved swell of a wave.

It seemed to Serrano as though the very bottom dropped out of the sea. Mountains of water towered above, and the great liner swirled down into the maelstrom like a leaf in a drain.

In that last, dread moment of time, it was as if the clouds had mingled with the ocean, as though all life-giving space of air had been eliminated.

Darkness lowered over the world, but it was a darkness born of hell itself, sulphurous, fire-shot, luminous with all unearthly brilliancy. The water was black, black with the rushing torrents of monstrous Niagaras plunging over its crests, whose foam seemed strangled before it could rise. The liner rose from its depths on the tidal wave, rose higher and higher until it seemed to touch the very sky.

To the struggling, terror-stricken mass on the steamer that last moment was an eternity of Inferno. In the awful expectancy they met and grappled with death in a thousand forms before the black moment passed.

Among the maddened crowds along the sides of the ship one figure stood out in the memory of Nick, a tall, fair, royal youngster, who waved farewell to him and stooped to lift a frightened child from being trampled underfoot.

The next conscious thought he had was one of thankfulness. The ropes had held that bound the girl to the raft, and him to her.

"If the raft fails us, I can cut loose and take a chance with her," he had said to Max back on the ship.

"You can not swim with her in that sea."

"I can sink with her, then," he had retorted grimly.

The liner vanished from sight as the raft swept on. In all the world of raging chaos there were only he and she—man and woman—tossed between sea and sky.

But, strangely as it had come, so the tidal wave passed over the face of the ocean. After that one terrible upheaval, the sea gradually subsided. Yellow it lay, yellow as sulphur fumes, shot through with vivid greens and purples. Vast, out-reaching circles and swirling eddies of spume streaked its surface. And as the waves fell back into their dead calm of the past few days and the raft floated lazily, bodies showed here and there, dead fish and, worse, people from the ill-fated life-boats which had capsized through the frenzy of their occupants.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BURNING ISLAND

FOR how long they remained unconscious neither ever knew or realized. The light died out of the sky and when at last Nick opened his eyes he stared up at a mother-of-pearl mass of clouds, trying to recall the missing links of memory.

A movement and low moaning from Militza roused him. She was lying close to his side. Her long wet hair lay on his breast as he held her. He tried to loosen the ropes that bound her to him, but they were stiff and swollen with the salt water and he had to cut them with his pocketknife. As he sat up, freed, his feet struck another body which lay across the end of the life-raft. Face downward it lay, its wrist wound about in the side ropes, as though its owner had caught at them in desperation, feeling strength and senses leaving him in that last wild instant.

Max leaned over, and turned the body toward him so he could see the face. But at sight of the thin dark face, the wide narrow mouth, set and half open now in a grin at death, he uttered a smothered exclamation.

It was Andre, courier to the Grand Duchess.

He felt for his heart and found it beating sluggishly, irregularly. Dipping his hand into the sea to cast water on the stark face, he drew it back again in amazement. The water was hot. He had forgotten.

The raft swayed slightly to an idle underswell. It was drifting at the whim of the waves, apparently in a southerly direction, as nearly as he could tell from the position of the sun.

Even as he stood up to try and get his bearings a wave of black dizziness swept over him, and he fell back beside the girl, unconscious.

Hour after hour through the still, tropical night the raft drifted, with its half-dead human burden of three. Never had three such strangely antipodal natures

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been joined together in the brotherhood of common, human need. For the time being all earthly passion seemed to have been purged from their natures, all hatred, all fear, all class distinctions. Wrecked between sea and sky, with only the frail strength of the life-raft between them and the heated fathoms of ocean beneath, they floated on and on, in a dreamless, painless sleep.

Dawn broke shortly after three o'clock. It was a clearer morning than those of the past four days. The strange, shifting haze of saffron was slowly lifting. The water did not look so yellow.

Militza was the first to recover her senses, and when Serrano opened his eyes he found her bending over him. She put back her long hair from her face, and he saw her eyes were wide and tearless.

"I thought you must be dead," she said. "Why have we two lived?"

He did not answer her, but looked up into her eyes with that same deep, intent, questioning gaze as when they had first met, and she knew that Andre had spoken the truth. This was love. In silence he drew her to him, and they kissed, not as lovers kiss for the first time in the ecstasy that is half pain, but tenderly, solemnly, as if it were indeed the very consecration of a sacrament between the two.

She leaned back in the shelter of his arm as they sat up, staring out at the waste of water about. At their feet, so close they could have touched him, was the courier. Now and then he stirred and moaned, but slept on.

"We shall surely die," said Militza softly, over and over. "We have no food, no water, nothing. We shall surely die."

"Why should we?" he replied, kissing her hair that lay against his shoulder. "The danger is past. We are in the path of steamers. The weather is calm now. If we have been preserved through a cataclysm, we shall survive this."

She turned and threw her arm around his neck with sudden fierceness, her cheek pressed to his.

"I do not want to be saved! I would rather we died like this than take up all the horror of life again, Max. Think of it! If we should be picked up, it would mean separation. You would hurry on to Lenar, and I—I——"

She stopped, as Andre raised himself on one arm slowly, painfully, and looked fixedly at them.

"Well, how does it seem to be alive, Andre?" demanded Serrano, glad of the interruption. "Your devotion to your mistress has saved your life."

"It is the will of God," answered the Morvarian huskily. He managed to sit up and look about him, his arms clasped about his knees, his head shaking slightly from extreme weakness.

"Let him alone," whispered the girl. "He is bewildered. I wonder why the water is still so warm."

Andre stared at an object that was slowly shaping itself from the morning mist, and pointed it out to Nick.

DUE south it lay from them, not a hundred leagues off, a curious, dark, humpbacked mass, formless and characterless as a new fallen meteorite. At first he believed it to be the liner, probably a derelict now, but as the raft drifted steadily toward it, he could see it bore no semblance to a boat, but rather seemed to be a huge mass of rock. Around its shore line a faint, yellowish haze rose like steam.

"The rock yonder is hotter than the water," he said in French, without turning about.

The other two looked at the object in strange apathy. After the events of the past twenty-four hours everything else seemed atomic in proportion. To Serrano it seemed as though they were the very sport of fate, the three of them, drifting on a small raft in mid-ocean. Out of a liner's passenger list of hundreds they alone appeared to have survived the earthquake. It all seemed as dreamlike and chaotic as nature's own sudden insanity, yet even as the great natural laws of cause and effect underlay the sea-quake and tidal wave, so who might say what great, irresistible primal law of attraction had bound those three together in the final hour of fate?

All three watched the dark mass of rock as the raft approached it. It was a precarious perch of safety, the heated rim of a submerged volcano, cast up by the eruption.

"The raft drifts on it," Andre spoke again. "If it is very hot, then we shall all perish."

The calm fatalism of his words gave Nick a shock that brought him back to the

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normal. The sea was becoming shallower. The waves rippled in on the shores of the new island as though it had been there for ages. He realized that, whether the end were life or death, a struggle was imminent.

"I will take your mistress," he said to Andre. "Save the raft if you can."

Back on the liner he had divested himself of all the unnecessary clothing he could. Boots, coat, waistcoat were gone. With soaked trousers rolled high above his knees, he took the girl in his arms and stepped into the swirling, eddying breakers.

The water felt like the second plunge at a Turkish bath—hot and steaming, yet bearable for a few minutes.

"Put me down," Militza begged. "I can help myself."

"The rocks are slippery and you have shoes on. It is not safe." She said no more, but clung close to him while he went forward, trying each step first to be certain it was safe. Even at that time she thought how easily he bore her in his arms.

A shout from Andre startled both. The raft had slipped out of his grasp and was floating away.

"You'll have to let it go, now," called back Nick. "Save yourself!"

In another minute he stepped on the island and set his burden down. In silence they stared about them at the shore. Never before had man witnessed such a sight, they thought. Fresh from ocean-beds thousands of leagues below the surface of the water, there lay about them a mass of half-cooled lava, the veritable vomit of the half-gods whom the ancients believed lay chained beneath the sea.

The ground felt hotter than the water, as he stepped upon it. Another call from the courier made him turn. His arm was around Militza still, supporting her, holding her to him, as if in defiance of the very elements.

"What now?" he shouted back.

"Rain!" the Morvarian returned hoarsely. "It falls on my face. It will give us water to drink." He stepped lightly from rock to rock until he reached them. "Give her to me!" he demanded, holding out his arms. "I will care for her Excellenza now."

"You'll care for her?" the voice of Serrano rang out sharply. "And why not I?"

Andre smiled. His scanty dark hair was plastered down on his forehead from the water, his narrow eyelids seemed mere slits in his face.

"Her Excellenza will tell you why," he answered.

CHAPTER XIV

THE STRUGGLE ON THE ROCKS

A STRANGE tableau they made, these three waifs of circumstance, standing on the barren isle in the vague dawn-light.

Both men were in their shirt-sleeves, throats and legs bare like beach combers. Militza's hair fell loosely over her shoulders. She wore the white woolen peasant dress that had formed her daily ship garb except for dinner and evening. Drenched and breathless from their fight with the sea, they stood, forgetting the deadly peril they faced, everything, in their little personal drama of life, when any moment might end it all.

Andre had turned to the girl, his head thrust forward, his eyes glowing, arms outstretched.

"Tell him!" he repeated hoarsely. "Tell him the truth!"

"Andre, no scarlet poppies here!" she cried imploringly. "All that lies back of us now."

The words leaped to his lips in fierce denunciation.

"Ah, you would protect him, even here! It was lies you spoke on the steamer to me, to Tanta! You do love him!"

She bowed her head.

"I love him, Andre. What can it matter now, when we shall all three surely die?"

"But I would have truth, my God, truth!" shouted the Morvarian, his eyes bloodshot with the frenzy of fanaticism. "I would have this man know that the woman he has dared to attract to him has swerved from her oath, has turned traitor and renegade to her most sacred trust! Yes, I would tell him all, Militza of Vilma, and see if he will caress those lips that are forsworn, will press you to his heart when he knows that you had sworn to kill him before the *Prinzessin Luise* should land at Trieste!"

At sight of the girl's strained, pallid face Nick tried to draw her to him, but she pulled her hands from his clasp.

"Don't, don't touch me!" she said, her beautiful face uplifted to his own. "He speaks the truth."

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"There is no truth left now between you and me, dear heart, excepting that I love you." He turned on the courier. "I shall take her Excellenza up on the rocks. You will remain down here, within sight. There is no food here, and no way of obtaining any. So we shall probably die in a few days, the three of us. But, whether we live or whether we die, we keep separate, understand—you down here, within sight, her Excellenza and myself up yonder. If you attempt to come after us, I will kill you. This talk of what might have been is foolish now. We live in the eternal present, and if there is to be bloodshed here among us three, I swear to God I'll get you first!"

He lifted the girl in his arms and carried her up the rocks to where a shelving mass offered some shelter from the rain. The ground still felt warm to his bare feet, but it was cooling slowly with the falling rain to help.

The ground seemed spongelike, filled with sudden gaps and holes, like gigantic coral beds. Twice he nearly stumbled on slippery piles of submarine fungi, unnatural growths that reached forth branching arms and overspread the ground.

Finally he gained the point he sought and laid her under its shelter.

Down at the water's edge Andre walked back and forth, hour after hour, drenched, tireless, and forlorn. Sometimes he would pause, and stare up at the rocks to where the two figures were visible, then resume his march again.

For a long while Militza lay silent, her face turned away from Serrano. He thought she slept, and, watching there, thoughts raced madly through his mind.

Andre's words had certainly confirmed Taub's suspicions. The Morvarian and the Grand Duchess were aboard the ship to kill Prince Maximilian—to prevent his reaching Lenar at all costs until the revolutionists could rise and seize the country.

Estvan Nagy, son of the red leader at Lenar, had been following, not the Prince but Taub himself, laying aside the cause for his own private vengeance for the death of Militza's father.

Sitting there, in this veritable abomination of desolation, this oceanic lava island, he saw through the whole cold-blooded, pitiless plot. The Baron had been right. The Grand Duchess herself was in the conspiracy against the throne. The revolutionists had won her loyalty, working on her love for her dead father. She had become their weapon against Maximilian, longing to further the cause and believing it would bring about the brotherhood of man, at least in Morvaria, as a lesson to the kingdoms of the world.

ODDLY enough, in that lonely hour a hot wave of indignation rose in his heart, not against the girl who had been sent on her errand of death, but against those who had sent her; against the man Andre, who had been deputed to spy on her, see that she did not quail or break down at the crucial moment.

He could see how all her life's sympathies had been bound up in her love for her father, how the idealism and unfaltering progress toward a higher truth in common ways of living had made her believe his cause the right one, and that he had fallen a victim to it, a martyr.

The man known as Leo Pavlovavitch had never been a thrower of bombs, or murderer of women and children. He had been a seeker after truth in its highest sense, a man who had laid aside his state as Grand Duke, and had donned the clothes and habits of a humble laborer, that he might mingle in the ranks of warped humanity. He had been a collector of data, a giver of wealth, a brother to all who called on him for help, a man who honestly endeavored to trace the reasons and causes of the deadly chronic diseases that sapped the health of the commonwealth of man.

All this he had been, and it was this side of socialism Militza had known and imbibed the truths of. But of how those fundamental truths and tenets could become perverted and distorted in ignorant brains, under the influence of an inflamed imagination, she knew nothing. She had been like a child in the power of the revolutionists that met at the house of Renalt the blacksmith. She had gone there first to study the conditions of the many peasant girls who worked in the mills. She had listened to speeches from men who traveled about preaching "the truth," as they called it. And gradually, step by step, they had led her on to this final step, until she had felt that in this last act of renunciation she fulfilled all that Leo Pavlovavitch longed to accomplish, in overthrowing a monarchy that had drained the people of

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life and happiness, and even common necessities, that it might flourish.

Serrano was roused by Militza speaking to him. She sat up, leaning heavily on one hand, pushing back her hair with the other.

"I have been asleep, haven't I? Where is Andre?"

He pointed out the form of the courier to her, down on the shore.

"How long before it is night?" she asked faintly.

"Hours yet," he told her.

"Do you think we will die tomorrow?"

The fatalism in her tone startled him; more, it roused him to swift, bitter anger. This too, was part of her teachings at Lenar. They had stolen all love of life from her being, and left desolation and indifference. He turned and took her hands in his, pressing them to his face to warm them.

"We are not going to die. I have felt that since we left the liner. Why do you welcome such a thought?"

"It would be best." Her tone held a flash of her old spirit. "I do not want to lose you now."

He drew her to him and they sat together under the shadow of the great rock, listening to the ceaseless downpour of rain, watching the vivid flashes of lightning cut the sky far to the south, watching, too, the solitary figure down on the rocks.

"Don't," she whispered once as his lips sought hers, and she pressed his face away from her with both hands. "Don't, until I tell you. Do you know that Andre and Tanta and I followed Taub to New York, that we found out he had located you there, and that you were to sail without fail on the *Luise?* Do you know that if we had remained on the liner, surely, surely I must have killed you?"

He laughed and kissed her forbidding hands.

"What does it matter now? We little humans plot and plan like ants in our strange little way, and nature working with its God, does—this." He stretched out his hand toward the vast space about them. "Otto lies dying in the old palace above Lenar. Perhaps he is already dead. The liner has gone. All the world seems gone. There are only you and I left, dear, here alone, on a pinnacle of rock in mid-ocean. Andre yonder is the incarnation of the destiny that tried to separate us. Yet in spite of all, you are here, close in my arms, mine alone. I knew you would be when we met that first day on the boat. So did you. We do not fight against such things any more than the land fights back the sea, or the sea the sunlight."

She did not answer. Instead, one hand pointed out to sea and she leaned forward. Out of the grayness of the falling rain came a sound, far off but unmistakable. It was the long-drawn signal-horn of a steamer. Again and again it came. She turned her face to his, alert, eager.

"We have nothing to answer with."

He laughed as he sprang to his feet.

"That's my brave fighting mate! A moment ago you wanted to die, but now, now, sweetheart, we shall live!"

"See!" she cried. "Andre has gone from the beach."

Almost before the words were spoken a figure shot from the base of the rocks beside them and caught at Serrano, seizing at his throat from behind and forcing him backward. Insane with his purpose, filled with a frenzied exaltation, a maddened strength, Andre was trying to wipe out the last of the dynasty of Otto.

"Thou thinkest thou shalt be saved," he muttered. "For this was I sent, for this, when she weakened!"

To and fro they struggled on the narrow ledge, and always, minute by minute, there came the dull, insistent call from the waters, the call that meant life and fulfilment of hope. In the first shock Militza stood crouching back against the rock, but all at once the gleam of steel in Andre's hand caught her eye, and something awoke in her, some latent spark of Magyar fury, long smothered under the bonds of convention and training, some swift Gypsy instinct to save her mate, the man she loved, before he should be murdered before her eyes.

With one long cry that rang out over the island she threw herself on the lithe, short Morvarian, her hand seizing his wrist, the other arm thrown about his throat and gripping his shoulder.

"Now, Max, now!" she cried. "Kill him now!"

But the form of the courier suddenly collapsed, his free hand caught at the air, and before either could stop him, he fell backward off the ledge. From below there

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came a dull crash, as he struck the rocks. Then silence.

From the sea there came again the long, deep boom of the signal whistles.

CHAPTER XV

RESCUED

ONE week later, the South American liner, *City of Para*, put in at her slip in the harbor of Buenos Ayres, after an unusually eventful passage.

On her upper deck stood Militza, and her prince incognito. It was the girl's first day in the open air since they had been rescued from the island of fire. The long exposure and lack of food had been too great a strain and she had been constantly under the care of the ship's doctor.

Her face was colorless, a clear, delicate ivory, that left her lips a deeper tint and her eyes a softer brown in contrast. She stared almost wistfully out at the city's outline of buildings, at the native stevedores swarming on the docks, at the children holding up baskets of fruit and flowers toward her from boats alongside.

"I have the recent newspapers," Serrano was saying. "I got them from the boys on the press boat that came out to meet us."

"Why should they come to meet us?" her eyes questioned him swiftly with the old eagerness.

"Are we not persons of importance, Excellenza?" he laughed.

"There is something you are keeping from me," she said, after a minute, with her air of grave, sweet dignity that he loved to see. "How can you laugh after the living death we have passed through? Life has been granted to us, a gift of fate that we accept blindly, but what of the hundreds that perished, the women and little children, poor Tanta and your friend Lieutenant Serrano?"

"Do you feel well and strong?" he asked, disregarding her words, looking at her with the old intentness.

"I am well, but——" She put the question from her with a little movement of both hands. "I shall never lose the memory of that other, never, Max."

"Have they told you anything at all—how they happened to seek us, or anything else?"

"No. I have been told nothing. I was kept very quiet, and let sleep all I could. Why?"

"Then, listen quietly, dear heart, and try to be steady nerved." He laid one hand over her own as it rested on the rail beside him, and went on.

"Boats like this do not leave their course on a wild-goose chase over the trackless sea without a good reason. This was picked up by wireless the day after the sea-quake, by the Steamer *Providencia*, a Mediterranean liner."

"It was in the next slip to ours the day we sailed from New York," interposed Militza, her eyes half closed, as she listened. "I remember the Spanish flag on her. Go on."

"The *Providencia* took almost the same course in crossing as the *Prinzessin Luise*. She was just far enough behind us to escape the full force of the tidal wave, and near enough to get the Austrian liner's call for help by wireless and take off her passengers."

"Max! Max!" exclaimed the girl. She leaned heavily on the railing, her head upraised, her eyes closed. From the deck there burst forth the music of a Spanish band—rich, vibrant, dashing melody that sent the blood dancing in time with its lilting rhythm. The man beside her drew her hand through his arm and led her back into the shelter of the saloon, away from curious eyes.

"Never mind me!" she pleaded. "Tell me more, tell me all! I am strong, truly I am."

"Are you, dear? God knows you need to be now," he said, gently. "Read this with me."

He took a newspaper from his pocket and unfolded the pages so that she might see its headlines. It was a Buenos Ayres daily, a day old, which he had procured from the press boat. She took it and looked where he pointed. It gave the news by wireless, from Europe, of the successful crushing down of the revolution in Morvaria, following the death of King Otto, and of the accession to the throne of Prince Maximilian, nephew to the late king. Lower down in the column it told of the prince's timely rescue from death on the *Prinzessin Luise*, the ill-fated liner that had been disabled in mid-ocean by the sea-quake and tidal wave.

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The Grand Duchess raised her head and met his steady gaze in bewildered amazement.

"Prince Maximilian ascends the throne!" she repeated slowly. "*Then who are you?*"

"I am Nicholas Serrano, your Excellenza."

Quietly, tenderly he answered her, a gleam of amusement in his eyes as he gave her the title. Her hands reached toward him quickly, and a sob of relief came from her lips.

"Oh, thank God!" she cried.

THE saloon was deserted. All of the passengers save themselves had hastened below as the vessel docked. He held her in his arms in silence for a few moments until the first passion of weeping had spent itself after the tension of the voyage. Finally she raised her beautiful face to his.

"Tell me why this was done. Why was I tortured into believing I had sworn to kill the man I loved?"

"To save the life of the Prince," he told her gravely. "It was Taub's plan. He suspected a plot as soon as we learned of your presence on the ship——"

"How did you know of it?"

"Max recognized you when you came aboard and, for the rest, Taub bribed the Albanian steward. We knew that Andre had never seen Max, and that you would scarcely recall the boy whom you had met at a hunting-party years ago. Taub held that everything was staked on the safe passage of the Prince, and that it was imperilled so long as you were on board. Forgive me, dearest, if I pain you——"

"Go on!" she said, tersely, with pale lips. "It is the truth. His life was in peril. I had sworn to kill him on the voyage, God help me!"

"Hush!" he pressed her hands warmly in his own strong, reassuring grasp. "You must not think of it now. Enough that we changed identities pro tem., Max and myself. I gave them both my solemn oath that I would not tell the truth to a living soul until Max was safely crowned at Lenar. Can you understand, love?"

"And yet you give me your hand?" she faltered.

"I give you my life," he returned simply. "If you can forgive my duplicity."

Swiftly, passionately, her slim arms folded about his neck and drew his head down to her lips.

"You are my prince, Nicholas, always."

Presently she leaned back from his embrace, a sudden flash of memory disturbing her,

"What of my aunt?"

"The despatch says Madame Pavlova went on to the capital of Vilma, broken in health over the loss at sea of her niece, the Grand Duchess Militza."

"What of Tatiana and the boy?"

"The leader of the revolutionists, Renalt, was executed at Lenar by order of the king. His son, Estvan, escaped with his young wife, Tatiana Leova, into Vilma."

"And Morvaria is free from its crimson stain?"

"As free as Max can make it, and, believe me, he will fight for a clean bill of health. I know the lad!" He laughed happily. "Shall we return to Morvaria for our honeymoon, your Excellenza?"

Slowly her long dark eyes lifted and she met his eyes with that same full look of perfect understanding as when they had first met. Faintly the color stole back to her cheeks, as she whispered back to him,

"Where you please, my prince."

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